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THE WRITINGS OF
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTIONS
PORTRAITS, AND OTHER
ILLUSTRATIONS

IN SIXTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME XV

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The Writings of Harriet Beecher Stowe

Riverside Edition

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RELIGIOUS STUDIES
SKETCHES AND POEMS

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BY

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

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The frontispiece portrait of Mrs. Stowe is from a photograph taken in 1862.

The vignette (Mrs. Stowe's home at Andover, Mass.) is from a painting in 1860 by F. Roundel.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

No one can read Mrs. Stowe's writings as a whole without perceiving how constant is the appeal to the religious sensibilities. Her greatest book, which took captive the humblest reader and such a genius in literature as George Sand, was in a marked degree a religious book; and again and again, even in playful scenes, there is a quick passage to the religious nature. The explanation is in the simple fact that Mrs. Stowe herself from early girlhood to her latest years was governed by religion, and it is not surprising, therefore, that an entire volume should be gathered from her writings exclusively given over to direct expression of religious feeling and thought.

She would gladly, especially in her later life, have confined herself to writing of this sort, for the realities of faith, especially the presence of the Divine Master, came to have a commanding power over her mind and heart, and to make her almost impatient of much concern about adventures of the ordinary sort. Even the reminiscence of the racy life of the New England of her childhood could not absorb her. "I would much rather," she writes in 1876 to her son Charles, "have written another such a book as *Footsteps of the Master*, but all, even the religious papers, are gone mad on serials." The book which she was then writing was *Poganuc People*, and the reader knows what a thread of religious experience runs through that lively narrative.

Footsteps of the Master was published in 1877. In its original form, each section contained interludes of verse, sometimes her own, more frequently hymns and poems

from well-known sources. There were also scriptural passages illustrative of the great divisions, and the book was set forth thus as a devotional companion. In reissuing it in this volume, the poems by the author have been preserved in the section given to her Religious Poems; the others and the illustrative scriptural passages have been omitted and Mrs. Stowe's Meditations preserved in their continuous form. The word "To the Reader," prefixed to the volume, is as follows: —

When a city is closely besieged and many of its outworks destroyed, the defenders retreat to the citadel. In our day there is warm fighting about the outworks of Christianity. Many things are battered down that used to be thought indispensable to its defense. It is time to retreat to the citadel; and that citadel is CHRIST.

The old mediæval symbol shown above[1] is still more than ever good for our day. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is still our King, our Light, our Law, our Leader. These names comprise all that a human being needs in this transitory, perplexing and dangerous pilgrimage of life.

We are born to suffer. The very conditions of our mortal existence here imply suffering of the most terrible kind as a possibility, a probability, or a certainty. We have affections absorbing our whole being which are hourly menaced by danger and by death — at any moment our sweetest joys may become sources only of bitterest remembrance.

We are born to perplexity. We stand amid the jar and conflict of a thousand natural laws, to us inexplicable, and which every hour threaten us in ourselves or those dearer than ourselves. We stand often in no less perplexity of moral law in ways where the path of duty and right is darkened and beset.

We are born to die. At the end of every possible road

[1] The familiar combination of Rex. Lux, Lex, Dux.

of life lies the dark River — the unknown future. If we cling to life, it is only to see it wither gradually in our hands, to see friends dropping from our side, places vacant at our fireside, infirmities and pains gathering about us, and a new generation with their impetuous energies rising around us to say, Why do you wait here ? Why are you not gone?

And the Hereafter ? What is it ? Who will go with us into that future where no friend, however dear, can accompany the soul ? What hand of power and love will take ours in the last darkness, when we have let go all others ?

The dear old book which we call the Bible gives our answer to all this. It tells us of a Being so one with the great Author of nature and Source of all power that whoso hath seen him hath seen the Creator. It tells us that all things that we behold in our material world were made by him and for him : that it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and that to him all things in heaven and on earth are made subject. It shows him to us from the beginning of time as constantly absorbed in the care and education of this world of ours. He has been the Desire of all nations — predicted, waited for, come at last!

And when he came and lived a mortal life what did he show the divine nature to be ? It may all be told in one word : — LOVE. Love, unconquered, unconquerable by human sin and waywardness. Love, sympathetic with the inevitable sorrows of human existence. Love, expressed in every form by which a God could express love. His touch was healing ; the very hem of his garment had restoring virtue. He lived and loved as we live and love, only on a higher ideal, — he gave to every human affection a more complete interpretation, a more perfect fullness. And finally, as the highest revelation of Love, he died for us, and in anguish and blood and dying pains still loved, still prayed for us, the ungrateful race of man. He passed

through the night of death that he might learn not to fear it, and came forth radiant and immortal to tell us that we shall never die.

By a refinement of infinite mercy, the law of our lives is written not in hard statutes but in the life of this tender and sympathetic friend. Christ is our law. We learn courage, patience, fortitude, forgiving love from him. The lesson impossible in statute is made easy by sympathy. But lest the very brightness of the ideal fill us with despair we have his promise, "Lo, *I* am with you alway to the end of the world! I will not leave you comfortless. I will come to you." Jesus, as an inseparable soul-friend — a consoler, a teacher, an enlightener — dwells on earth now in a higher sense than when he walked the hills of Palestine.

"Forever more beside us on our way,
The unseen Christ doth move,
That we may lean upon his arm and say,
'Dost thou, dear Lord, approve?'"

To that great multitude whom no man can number, who are living the hidden life of faith, these studies into the life of our Master are dedicated. They have been arranged in the order of the seasons of the Christian year, with the hope of aiding the efforts of those who wish at these sacred seasons to bring our Lord more clearly to mind.

We hear much of modern skepticism. There is, perhaps, no more in the world now than there has always been, only its forms are changed. Its answer lies not in argument, but in the lives of Christ's followers. It was Christians who lived like Christ that won the first battle for Christianity, and it must be Christians who live like Christ that shall win the last. The life of faith in the Son of God, when fully lived out, always has been and always will be a victorious argument.

But to live this our faith must be firm. We cannot meet a skeptical world with weak faith. If we would

draw our friend out of a swift-rushing current, our own feet must not stand on slippery places. We must seek faith in looking to Him who has the giving of it. We must keep Him before our minds, and come so near Him in daily prayer that we can say: "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, declare we unto you."

And even to those who have no conscious belief in Christ, his name can never be a matter of indifference. Whether they believe it or not, Christ stands to them in a peculiar relation that no other being holds. He is their best Friend, the Shepherd that is seeking them, the generous Saviour and Giver that is longing to save them from all that they fear and to give exceeding abundantly beyond all they can ask or think.

The other *Studies* and the *Religious Sketches* which follow are drawn from the early *Mayflower* and intimate how instinctively in the beginning of her career as a writer Mrs. Stowe turned her mind in this direction. Her poems appeared at irregular intervals and were gathered into a volume by themselves in 1867. The collection then issued is here slightly enlarged by the inclusion of one or two estrays.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

FOOTSTEPS OF THE MASTER

I

CHRIST IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Our Lord asserts nothing more frequently than that he came to this world, not as other men come, but as a voluntary exile from a higher and purer life. He said in public, speaking to the Jews, "I came down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me." When the Jews tauntingly said to him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" he answered, "Before Abraham was, I AM." In fact, while he walked as a brother among men, there were constant and mysterious flashes from the life of a higher sphere. Jesus moved about in our life as a sympathetic foreigner who ever and anon in moments of high excitement breaks out into his native language. So Christ at times rose into the language of heaven, and spoke for a moment, unconsciously as it were, in the style of a higher world.

He did not say, "Before Abraham was, I *was*," but "I AM," using the same form which in the Old Testament is used by Jehovah when he declares his name to Moses, "I AM that I am." So, too, when conversing with Nicodemus, our Lord asserts that he is the only person compe-

tent to bear testimony to heavenly things, because he came from heaven.

He says, "No man hath ascended into heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." This last is one of those changes into the language of a higher world which so often awed and perplexed those who talked with Jesus. It would seem that he had the power by moments to breathe aside the veil which separates from the higher state, and to be in heaven. Such a moment was this, when he was declaring to an honest-minded, thoughtful inquirer the higher truths of the spiritual life, and asserting his right to know about heavenly things, because he came down from heaven — yea, because for the moment he was in heaven.

But in the last hours of his life, when he felt the scenes of his humiliations and sufferings approaching, he declared this truth, so often shadowed and intimated, with explicit plainness. He said, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world. Again, I leave the world, and go to the Father." This was stating the truth as plainly as human words can do it, and the disciples at last understood him fully. "Lo! now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb." And in that affecting prayer that followed our Lord breathes the language of an exile longing to return to the home of his love: "And now, O Father! glorify me with thine own self — with the glory that I had with thee before the world was."

It is then most plain on the face of the New Testament that our Lord had a history before he came to this world. He was a living power. He was, as he says, in glory with the Father before the world was. Are there any traces of this mysterious Word, this divine Son, this Revealer of God in the Old Testament? It has been the approved sentiment of sound theologians that in the Old Testament every visible appearance of an Angel or divine

Man to whom the name of Jehovah is given is a pre-appearance of the Redeemer, Jesus. It is a most interesting study to pursue this idea through the Old Testament history, as is fully done by President Edwards in his "History of Redemption" and by Dr. Watts in his "True Glory of Christ." In Milton's "Paradise Lost" he represents the Son of God as being "the Lord God who walked in the Garden of Eden" after the trespass of our first parents, and dwells on the tenderness of the idea that it was in the cool of the day, —

> "when from wrath more cool
> Came the mild Judge and Intercessor both."

This sentiment of the church has arisen from the plain declaration in the first chapter of John, where it is plainly asserted that "no man hath seen God at any time, but the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The Old Testament records to which our Lord constantly appealed were full of instances in which a being called Jehovah, and spoken of as God, — the Almighty God, — had appeared to men, and the inference is plain that all these were pre-appearances of Christ.

It is an interesting study for the sacred season of Advent to trace those pre-appearances of our Lord and Saviour in the advancing history of our race. A series of readings of this sort would be a fit preparation for the triumphs of Christmas, when he, the long-desired, was at last given visible to man.

We shall follow a few of these early appearances of the Saviour, in the hope that some pious hearts may be led to see those traces of his sacred footsteps, which brighten the rugged ways of the Old Testament history.

In the eighteenth chapter of Genesis we have an account of a long interview of Abraham with a being in human form, whom he addresses as Jehovah, the Judge of all the earth. We hear him plead with him in words like these: —

"Behold now, I have taken on me to speak unto Jehovah, which am but dust and ashes . . . that be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

What a divine reticence and composure it was, on the part of our Lord, when afterwards he came to earth and the scoffing Jews said to him, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He did not tell them how their father Abraham had been a suppliant at his feet ages ago, yet he must have thought of it as they thus taunted him.

Again we read in Genesis xxviii., when Jacob left his father's house and lay down, a lonely traveler, in the fields with a stone for his pillow, the pitying Jesus appeared to him:—

"He dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached unto heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending upon it. And behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, God of Abraham, thy father."

As afterwards Jesus, at the well of Samaria, chose to disclose his Messiahship to the vain, light-minded, guilty Samaritan woman, and call her to be a messenger of his good to her townsmen, so now he chose Jacob — of whom the worst we know is that he had yielded to an unworthy plot for deceiving his father — he chose him to be the father of a powerful nation. Afterward our Lord alludes to this vision in one of his first conversations with Nathaniel, as given by St. John:—

"Jesus said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. Verily I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending *upon the Son of man.*"

This same divine Patron and Presence watches over the

friendless Jacob until he becomes rich and powerful, the father of a numerous tribe. He is returning with his whole caravan to his native land. But the consequence of his former sin meets him on the way. Esau, the brother whom he deceived and overreached, is a powerful prince, and comes to meet him with a band of men.

Then Jacob was afraid and distressed, and applies at once to his heavenly Helper. "I am not worthy," he says, "of all the mercy and all the truth which thou hast shown to thy servant, for with my staff I passed over this Jordan and now I am become two bands. Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me and the mother with the children." Such things were common in those days — they were possible and too probable — and what father would not pray as Jacob prayed?

Then follows a passage of singular and thrilling character. A mysterious stranger comes to him, dimly seen in the shadows of the coming dawn. Is it that human Friend — that divine Jehovah? Trembling and hoping he strives to detain him, but the stranger seeks to flee from him. Made desperate by the agony of fear and entreaty, he throws his arms around him and seeks to hold him. The story is told briefly thus: —

"And Jacob was left alone. And there wrestled A MAN with him until the breaking of day. And when he saw that he prevailed not he touched the hollow of his thigh, and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him. And the man said, Let me go, for the day breaketh; and he said, I will not let thee go except thou bless me. And he said, What is thy name? and he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince thou hast power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob said, I beseech thee tell me thy name. And he said, Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there."

How like is this mysterious stranger to the One in the New Testament history who after the resurrection joined the two sorrowful disciples on the way to Emmaus. There is the same mystery, the same reserve in giving himself fully to the trembling human beings who clung to him. So when the disciples came to their abode "he made as though he would go farther," and they constrained him and he went in. As he breaks the bread they know him, and immediately he vanishes out of their sight.

In his dying hour (Gen. xlviii.) the patriarch Jacob, after an earthly pilgrimage of a hundred and forty-seven years, recalls these blessed visions of his God: —

"And Jacob said to Joseph, God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me."

And again, blessing the children of Joseph, he says: —

"God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads."

But it was not merely to the chosen father of the chosen nation that this pitying Friend and Saviour appeared. When the poor, passionate, desperate slave-girl Hagar was wandering in the wilderness, struggling with the pride and passion of her unsubdued nature, he who follows the one wandering sheep appeared and spoke to her (Gen. xvi.). He reproved her passionate impatience; he counseled submission; he promised his protection and care to the son that should be born of her and the race that should spring from her. Wild and turbulent that race of men should be; and yet there was to be a Saviour, a Care-taker, a Shepherd for them. "And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me; for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?"

Afterwards, when the fiery, indomitable passions of the slave-woman again break forth and threaten the peace of the home, and she is sent forth into the wilderness, the

Good Shepherd again appears to her. Thus is the story told (Gen. xxi.): —

"And the water was spent in the bottle, and she cast the child under one of the shrubs, and she went and sat down a good way off, for she said, Let me not see the death of the child. And God heard the voice of the lad, and the angel of the Lord called to Hagar out of heaven, saying, What aileth thee, Hagar? fear not. God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, hold him in thy hand, for I will make of him a great nation. And God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water."

Thus did he declare himself the Care-taker and Saviour not of the Jews merely, but of the Gentiles. It was he who afterwards declared that he was the living bread which came down from heaven, which he gave for the life of the WHOLE WORLD.

Afterwards, in the history of Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, we read of a divine Being who talked with him in a visible intimacy: —

"And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and Jehovah talked with Moses. And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door, and all the people rose up and worshiped, each man in his tent door. *And Jehovah spake unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.*"

Some record of this strange conversation is given. Moses was a man of wonderful soul, in whom was the divine yearning; he longed to know more and more of his God, and at last beseeches to have the full beatific vision of the divine nature in its glory; but the answer is: "Thou canst not see my face [in its divine glory], for there shall no man see me and live." That overpowering vision was not for flesh and blood; it would dissolve the frail bonds of mortality and set the soul free, and Moses must yet live, and labor, and suffer.

What an affecting light this interview of Moses sheds on that scene in the New Testament, where, just before his crucifixion, the disciples see their Master in the glory of the heavenly world, and with him Moses and Elijah, "who spake with him of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem," — Moses, who had been taught by the divine Word in the wilderness how to organize all that system of forms and sacrifices which were to foreshadow and prepare the way for the great Sacrifice — the great Revealer of God to man. We see these noble souls, the two grandest prophets of the Old Testament, in communion with our Lord about that last and final sacrifice which was to fulfill and bring to an end all others.

A little later on, in the Old Testament history, we come to a time recorded in the Book of Judges when the chosen people, settled in the land of Canaan, sunk in worldliness and sin, have forgotten the Lord Jehovah, and as a punishment are left to be bitterly oppressed and harassed by the savage tribes in their neighborhood. The nation was in danger of extinction. The stock from which was to come prophets and apostles, the writers of the Bible which we now read, from which was to come our Lord Jesus Christ, was in danger of being trampled out under the heel of barbarous heathen tribes. It was a crisis needing a deliverer. Physical strength, brute force, was the law of the day, and a deliverer was to be given who could overcome force by superior force.

Again the mysterious stranger appears; we have the account in Judges xiii.

A pious old couple who have lived childless hitherto receive an angelic visitor who announces to them the birth of a deliverer. And the woman came and told her husband, saying, "A man of God came unto me, and his countenance was like the countenance of an angel of God, very terrible; but I asked him not whence he was, neither told

he me his name." This man, she goes on to say, had promised a son to them who should deliver Israel from the hand of the Philistines. Manoah then prays to God to grant another interview with the heavenly messenger.

The prayer is heard; the divine Man again appears to them and gives directions for the care of the future child, — directions requiring the most perfect temperance and purity on the part of both mother and child. The rest of the story is better given in the quaint and beautiful words of the Bible: —

"And Manoah said to the angel of Jehovah, I pray thee let us detain thee till we shall have made ready a kid for thee. And the angel of Jehovah said to Manoah, Though thou detain me I will not eat of thy bread; and if thou wilt offer a burnt offering thou must offer it unto Jehovah. For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of Jehovah. And Manoah said, What is thy name? that when thy sayings come to pass we may do thee honor. And the angel of the Lord said unto him, Why askest thou my name, seeing that it is secret? So Manoah took a kid with a meat offering and offered it upon a rock to the Lord; and the angel did wonderously, and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up to heaven from off the altar, that the angel of Jehovah ascended in the flame on the altar, and Manoah and his wife fell on their faces on the ground. And Manoah said, We shall surely die, for we have seen God."

This tender, guiding Power, this long-suffering and pitying Saviour of Israel, appears to us in frequent glimpses through the writings of the prophets.

Isaiah says, "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of his Presence saved them; in his love and his pity he redeemed them, and he bore and carried them all the days of old."

It is this thought that gives an inexpressible pathos to the rejection of Christ by the Jews. St. John begins his gospel by speaking of this divine Word, who was with God in the beginning, and was God; that he was in the

world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

This gives an awful, pathetic meaning to those tears which Christ shed over Jerusalem, and to that last yearning farewell to the doomed city: —

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not."

It gives significance to that passage of Revelation where Christ is called "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

Not alone in the four years when he ministered on earth was he the suffering Redeemer; he was always, from the foundation of the world, the devoted sacrifice: bearing on his heart the sinning, suffering, wandering race of man, afflicted in their afflictions, bearing their griefs and carrying their sorrows, the friend of the Jew and the Gentile, the seeker for the outcast, the guide of the wanderer, the defender of the helpless, the consoler of the desolate, the self-devoted offering to and for the sins of the world.

In all these revelations of God, one idea is very precious. He reveals himself not as a fixed Fate — a mighty, crushing, inexorable Power — but as a Being relenting, tender, yearning towards the race of man with infinite tenderness. He suffers himself to be importuned; he hides himself that he may be sought, and, although he is omnipotent, though with one touch he might weaken and paralyze human strength, yet he suffers human arms to detain and human importunity to conquer him, and he blesses the man that will not let him go except he bless. On this scene Charles Wesley has written his beautiful hymn beginning, —

"Come, O thou Traveler unknown."

The struggles, the sorrows, and aspirations of the soul for an unknown Saviour have never been more beautifully told.

II

CHRIST IN PROPHECY

In the Old Testament Scriptures we have from the beginning of the world an advent dawn — a rose sky of Promise. He is coming, is the mysterious voice that sounds everywhere, in history, in prophecy, in symbol, type, and shadow. It spreads through all races of men; it becomes an earnest aspiration, a sigh, a moan of struggling humanity, crying out for its Unknown God.

In the Garden of Eden came the first oracle, which declared that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. This was an intimation, vague yet distinct, that there should come a Deliverer who should break the power of evil. From that hour every mother had hope, and child-bearing was invested with dignity and blessing. When the mother of all brought the first son into the world, she fondly hoped that she had brought forth the Deliverer, and said, "I have gotten the man *Jehovah.*"

Poor mother! destined to a bitter anguish of disappointment! Thousands of years were to pass away before the second Eve should bring forth the man Jehovah.

In this earliest period we find in the history of Job the anguish, the perplexities, the despair of the helpless human creature, crushed and bleeding beneath the power of an unknown, mighty Being, whose ways seem cruel and inexplicable, but with whom he feels that expostulation is impossible: —

"Lo, he goeth by me and I see him not; he passeth on also and I perceive him not. Behold, he taketh away, and who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou? If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him. How then shall I answer him and choose out words to reason with him?"

Job admits that he desires to reason with God to ask some account of his ways. He says: —

"My soul is weary of my life. I will speak in the bitterness of my soul. I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; show me why thou contendest with me. Is it good that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work of thy hands?"

He then goes through with all the perplexing mysteries of life. He sees the wicked prosperous and successful, and he that had always been devoted to God reduced to the extreme of human misery; he wrestles with the problem; he longs to ask an explanation; but it all comes to one mournful conclusion: —

"He is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman [arbiter] between us, that might lay his hand on both of us. Let him take his rod away and let not his fear terrify me. Then would I speak; but it is not so with me."

Here we have in a word the deepest want of humanity: a daysman between the infinite God and finite man; a Mediator who should lay his hand on both of them! And then, in the midst of these yearnings and complainings, the Spirit of God, the Heavenly Comforter, bearing witness with Job's spirit, breaks forth in the prophetic song: —

"I know that my Redeemer liveth
And that he shall stand in the latter days upon the earth.
And though worms destroy this body,
Yet in my flesh shall I see God.
I shall see him for myself and not another.
My reins are consumed with longing for that day."

As time passes we have the history of one man, called from all the races of men to be the ancestor of this SEED. Abraham, called to leave his native land and go forth sojourning as a pilgrim and stranger on earth, receives a celestial visitor who says: "Abraham, I am the Almighty God. Walk before me and be thou perfect." He exacts of Abraham the extremes of devotion — not only to leave his country, kindred, friends, and be a sojourner in a strange land, but to sacrifice the only son of his heart. And Abraham meets the test without a wavering thought; his trust in God is absolute: and in return he receives the promise, "In THY SEED shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." How Abraham looked upon this promise we are told by our Lord himself. The Jews asked him, "Art thou greater than our father Abraham?" And he answered, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day — he saw it, and was glad."

The same promise was repeated to Jacob in the self-same words, when he lay sleeping in the field of Luz and saw the heavenly vision of the Son of man.

From the time of the first announcement to Abraham his descendants became the recipients of a special divine training, in which every event of their history had a fore-looking to this great consummation. They were taken into Egypt, and, after long suffering, delivered from a deadly oppression. In the solemn hour of their deliverance the blood of a spotless lamb — "a lamb without blemish" — was to mark the door-posts of each dwelling with a sign of redemption. "Not a bone of him shall be broken," said the ancient command, referring to this typical sacrifice; and when in a later day the Apostle John stood by the cross of Jesus and saw them break the limbs of the other two victims and leave Jesus untouched, he said, "that it might be fulfilled which was commanded, not a bone of Him shall be broken."

The yearly festival which commemorated this deliverance was a yearly prophecy in every Jewish family of the sinless Redeemer whose blood should be their salvation. A solemn ritual was instituted, every part of which was prophetic and symbolic. A high priest chosen from among his brethren, who could be touched with the feelings of their infirmities, was the only one allowed to enter that mysterious Holy of Holies where were the mercy-seat and the cherubim, the throne of the Invisible God. There, for the most part, unbroken stillness and solitude reigned. Only on one memorable day of the year, while all the congregation of Israel lay prostrate in penitence without, this high priest entered for them with the blood of atonement into the innermost presence of the King Invisible. Purified, arrayed in spotless garments, and bearing on his breast — graven on precious gems — the names of the tribes of Israel, he entered there, a yearly symbol and prophecy of the greater High Priest, who should "not by the blood of bulls and of goats, but by his own blood, enter at once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

Thus, by a series of symbols and ceremonies which filled the entire life of the Jew, the whole national mind was turned in an attitude of expectancy towards the future Messiah. In the more elevated and spiritual natures — the poets and the prophets — this was continually bursting forth into distinct predictions. Moses says, in his last message to Israel, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you from the midst of your brethren like unto me; unto Him shall ye hearken." Our Lord referred to this prophecy when he said to the unbelieving Jews, "Had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me."

The promise made at first to Abraham was afterwards repeated not only to Jacob, but long centuries afterward to

his descendant, David, in a solemn, prophetic message, relating first to the reign of Solomon, but ending with these words: "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be established forever before thee. Thy throne shall be established forever." That David understood these words as a promise that the Redeemer should be of his seed is evident from the declaration of St. Peter in Acts ii. 30, where he says that "David being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins he would raise up Messiah to sit on his throne, spake thus concerning him."

The Psalms of David are full of heaving, many-colored clouds and mists of poetry, out of which shine here and there glimpses of the mystic future. In the second Psalm we have a majestic drama. The heathen are raging against Jehovah and his anointed Son. They say, Let us break their bands in sunder and cast away their cords. Then the voice of Jehovah is heard in the tumult, saying calmly, "Yet have I set my king on my holy hill of Zion." Then an angelic herald proclaims: —

"I will declare the decree.
The Lord hath spoken:
Thou art my Son;
This day have I begotten thee:
Ask of me and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

This mighty king, this glorious defender, is celebrated as the All-Loving One. His reign is to be a reign of truth and love. All the dearest forms of human affection are used to shadow forth what he will be to his people. He is to be the royal bridegroom; his willing people the bride. So, in the forty-fifth Psalm, entitled "A Song of Love," we have the image of a mighty conqueror — radiant, beloved, adored, a being addressed both as God and the Son of God, who goes forth to victory: —

"Thou art fairer than the children of men.
Grace is poured into thy lips.
Therefore God hath blessed thee forever.
Gird thy sword on thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and majesty.
And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of thy truth and meekness and righteousness.
Thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.
A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity.
Therefore God — thy God — hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows."

Then follows a description of the royal bride, the king's daughter, who is all glorious within — her clothing of wrought gold — who with gladness and rejoicing shall be brought to the king to become mother of princes.

It is said by some that this is a marriage hymn for the wedding of a prince. It may have been so originated; but in the mind of the devout Jew every scene and event in life had become significant and symbolical of this greater future. Every deliverer suggested the greater Deliverer; the joy of every marriage suggested the joy of that divine marriage with a heavenly bridegroom.

So the seventy-second Psalm, written originally for Solomon, expands into language beyond all that can be said of any earthly monarch. It was the last poem of David, and the feelings of the king and father rose and melted into a great tide of imagery that belonged to nothing earthly :—

"Yea, all kings shall fall down before him;
All nations shall serve him.
He shall deliver the needy when he crieth;
The poor also, and him that hath no helper.
He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy.
He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence,
And precious shall their blood be in his sight.

And he shall live, and to him shall be given the gold of Sheba.
Prayer also shall be made for him continually, and daily shall he be praised.
His name shall endure forever.
His name shall be continued as long as the sun.
Men shall be blessed in him.
All nations shall call him blessed."

But in these same Psalms there are glimpses of a divine sufferer. In the twenty-second Psalm David speaks of sufferings which certainly never happened to himself — which were remarkably fulfilled in the last agonies of Jesus: —

"All they that see me laugh me to scorn.
They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
He trusted in God that he would deliver him.
Let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.
I am poured out like water; all my bones are out of joint.
My heart is like wax — it is melted in my bosom.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd.
My tongue cleaveth to my mouth.
Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
For dogs have compassed me,
The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me;
They pierced my hands and my feet.
I may tell all my bones. They look and stare on me.
They part my garments among them
And cast lots for my vesture."

In this Psalm, written more than a thousand years before he came into the world, our Lord beheld ever before him the scenes of his own crucifixion; he could see the heartless stare of idle, malignant curiosity around his cross; he could hear the very words of the taunts and revilings, and a part of the language of this Psalm was among his last utterances. While the shadows of the great darkness were gathering around his cross he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It would seem as if the words so bitterly fulfilled passed through his mind, as one

by one the agonies and indignities followed each other, till at last he bowed his head and said, "It is finished."

As time rolled on, this mingled chant of triumph and of suffering swelled clearer and plainer. In the grand soul of Isaiah, the Messiah and his kingdom were ever the outcome of every event that suggested itself. When the kingdom of Judah was threatened by foreign invasion, the prophet breaks out with the promise of a Deliverer: —

"Behold, the Lord himself shall give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us]."

Again he bursts forth as if he beheld the triumph as a present reality: —

"Unto us a child is born
Unto us a son is given.
The government shall be upon his shoulders.
His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor,
Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end,
Upon the throne of David and his kingdom,
To establish it with justice from henceforth and forever.
The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this."

Again, a few chapters further on, he sings: —

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse
A Branch shall grow out of his roots.
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him;
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and might,
The spirit of knowledge, and fear of the Lord.
With righteousness shall he judge the poor,
And reprove with equity for the meek of the earth."

Then follow vivid pictures of a golden age on earth, beneath his sway, when all enmities and ferocities even of

the inferior animals shall cease, and universal love and joy pervade the earth.

In the fifty-third of Isaiah we have again the sable thread of humiliation and sorrow; the Messiah is to be "despised and rejected of men;" his nation "hide their faces from him;" he "bears their griefs, and carries their sorrows," is "wounded for their transgressions," is "brought as a lamb to the slaughter," is "dumb before his accusers," is "taken from prison to judgment," is "cut off out of the land of the living," "makes his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death," and thence is "raised again to an endless kingdom."

Thus far the tide of prophecy had rolled; thus distinct and luminous had grown the conception of a future suffering, victorious Lord and leader, when the Jewish nation, for its sins and unfaithfulness, was suffered to go to wreck. The temple was destroyed and the nation swept into captivity in a foreign land.

But they carried everywhere with them the vision of their future Messiah. In their captivity and sufferings their religious feelings became intense, and, wherever they were, the Jews were always powerful and influential men. Daniel, by his divine skill in spiritual insight, became the chief of the Chaldean magi, and his teachings with regard to the future Messiah may be traced in those passages of the Zendavesta which predict his coming, his universal dominion, and the resurrection of the dead. Everywhere through all nations this scattered seed of the Jews touched the spark of desire and aspiration — the longing for a future Redeemer.

In the prophecies of Daniel we find the predictions of the Messiah assuming the clearness of forewritten history. The successive empires of the world are imaged under the symbol of a human body, with a head of gold, a breast of silver, body and thighs of brass, legs and feet of iron.

By these types were indicated the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman nations, with their successive rule. In prophetic vision, also, a stone was without hands cut out of the mountains, and it smote the feet of the image, so that the whole of it passed away like the chaff of the threshing-floor.

How striking this description of that invisible, spiritual force which struck the world in the time of the Roman empire, and before which all the ancient dynasties have vanished!

In the ninth chapter of Daniel, verses 25, 26, 27, we find given the exact time of the coming of the Messiah, of his death, of the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and the cessation of the Jewish worship and sacrifices. Remembering that Daniel was the head of the Chaldean magi, we see how it is that their descendants were able to calculate the time of the birth of Christ and come to worship him.[1]

At length the Jews were recalled from captivity and the temple rebuilt. While it was rebuilding prophets encouraged the work with prophecies of the LORD who should appear in it. The prophet Haggai (ii. 3–9) thus speaks to those who depreciate the new temple by comparing it with the old: —

"Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? Yet now be strong, all ye people of the land, and work, for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts. For thus

[1] M. Lenormant says in *The Magic of the Chaldees:* "The more one advances in the understanding of the cuneiform text, the more one sees the necessity of revising the condemnation too prematurely uttered against the Book of Daniel by the German Exegetical School. Without doubt, the use of certain Greek words serves to show that it has passed through the hands of some editor since the time of Alexander. But the substance of it is much more ancient — is imprinted with a perfectly distinct Babylonian tinge, and the picture of life in the court of Nabuchodonosor and his successors has an equal truthfulness which could not have been attained at a later period."

saith the Lord: Yet a little while and I will shake the heavens and earth, the sea and the dry land, and the Desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, for in this house will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The prophecies of Zechariah, which belonged to the same period and had the same object, — to encourage the rebuilding of the second temple, — are full of anticipation of the coming Messiah. The prophet breaks forth into song like a bird of the morning: —

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:
Behold, thy king cometh unto thee.
He is just and hath salvation;
He is lowly, riding upon an ass —
Upon a colt, the foal of an ass."

Again he breaks forth in another strain: —

"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd,
Against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts.
Smite the Shepherd,
And the sheep shall be scattered."

We remember that these words were quoted by our Lord to his disciples the night before his execution, when he was going forth to meet his murderers. A hundred or so of years later, the prophet Malachi says: —

"Behold, I send my messenger.
He shall prepare the way before me.
The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple:
Even the messenger of the covenant, in whom ye delight;
But who may abide the day of his coming?
Who shall stand when He appeareth?
For, like a refiner's fire shall He be,
And like fullers' soap.
He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.
He shall purify the sons of Levi."

How remarkably this prophecy describes the fiery vehemence and energy of our Lord's first visit to the temple, when he drove out the money-changers and completely cleansed the holy place of unseemly traffic!

With this prophet the voice of prediction ceases. Let us for a moment look back and trace its course. First, the vague promise of a Deliverer, born of a woman; then, a designation of the race from which he is to be born; then of the tribe; then of the family; then the very place of his birth is predicted — Bethlehem-Ephratah being mentioned to discriminate it from another Bethlehem. Then come a succession of pictures of a Being concerning whom the most opposite things are predicted. He is to be honored, adored, beloved; he is to be despised and rejected — his nation hide their faces from him. He is to be terrible and severe as a refiner's fire; he is to be so gentle that a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench. He is to be seized and carried from prison to judgment; he is surrounded by the wicked; his hands and feet are pierced, his garments divided; they cast lots for his vesture; he is united by his death both with the wicked and with the rich; he is cut off from the land of the living. He is cut off, but not for himself; his kingdom is to be an everlasting kingdom; he is to have dominion from sea to sea, and of the increase of his government and of peace there is to be no end.

How strange that for ages these conflicting and apparently contradictory oracles had been accumulating, until finally came One who fulfilled them all. Is not this indeed the Christ — the Son of God?

III

THE CRADLE OF BETHLEHEM

We should have supposed that when the time came for the entrance of the great Hero upon the stage of this world, magnificent preparations would be made to receive him. A nation had been called and separated from all tribes of earth that he might be born of them, and it had been their one special mission to prepare for the coming of this One, their Head and King, in whom the whole of their organization — laws, teachings, and prophecies — was to be fulfilled. Christ was the end for which the tabernacle was erected and the temple built, for whom were the Holy of Holies, the altars, and the sacrifices. He was the Coming One for whom priests and prophets had been for hundreds of years looking.

What should we have expected of divine wisdom when the glorious hour approached? We should have thought that the news would be sent to the leaders of the great national council of the Sanhedrim, to the High Priest and elders, that their Prince was at hand. Doubtless we should suppose that the nation, apprised of his coming, would have made ready his palace and have been watching at its door to do honor to their newborn King.

Far otherwise is the story as we have it.

In the poorest, most sordid, most despised village of Judæa dwelt, unknown and neglected, two members of the decayed and dethroned royal family of Judæa, — Joseph the carpenter and Mary his betrothed. Though every circumstance of the story shows the poverty of these individuals, yet they were not peasants. They were of royal lineage, reduced to the poverty and the simple life of the peasants. The Jews, intensely national, cherished the

tradition of David their warrior and poet prince; they sang his Psalms, they dwelt on his memory, and those persons, however poor and obscure, who knew that they had his blood in their veins were not likely to forget it.

There have been times in the history of Europe when royal princes, the heirs of thrones, have sojourned in poverty and obscurity, earning their bread by the labor of their hands. But the consciousness of royal blood and noble birth gave to them a secret largeness of view and nobility of feeling which distinguished them from common citizens.

The Song of Mary given in St. Luke shows the tone of her mind; shows her a woman steeped in the prophetic spirit and traditions, in the Psalms of her great ancestor, and herself possessing a lofty poetic nature.

We have the story of the birth of Christ in only two of the Evangelists. In Matthew we have all the facts and incidents such as must have been derived from Joseph, and in Luke we have those which could only have been told by Mary. She it is who must have related to St. Luke the visit of the angel and his salutation to her. She it is who tells of the state of her mind when those solemn mysterious words first fell upon her ear: —

"Hail thou, highly favored! The Lord is with thee: Blessed art thou among women!"

It is added, —

"And when she saw him she was troubled and cast about in her mind what manner of salutation this should be."

Only Mary could have told the interior state of her mind, the doubts, the troubles, the mental inquiries, known only to herself. The rest of the interview, the magnificent and solemn words of the angel, in the nature of things could have come to the historian only through Mary's narrative.

"Thou shalt conceive and bring forth a Son and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

In St. Matthew we have the history of the hesitation of Joseph, his manly delicacy and tenderness for his betrothed wife, and the divine message to him in a dream; all of which are things that could have been known only through his own narration.

We find also in this history, whose facts must have come from Joseph, a table of genealogy tracing his descent back to David, while in the account given by Mary in St. Luke there is another and different table of genealogy. The probable inference on the face of it would be that the one is the genealogy of Joseph and the other of Mary; and it confirms this supposition to find that she was spoken of in Rabbinic writings of an early period as the daughter of Heli,[1] who concludes the genealogy given in Luke, and on this supposition would be the father of Mary and grandfather of Jesus. Moreover, as the angel himself in announcing the birth of Christ laid special stress upon the fact that his mother was of the house of David, it is quite probable that the genealogy which proved that descent was very precious in Mary's eyes, and that this is therefore imbedded in the account which St. Luke derives from her, as the very chief treasure of her life. That genealogical record was probably the one hoarded gem of her poverty and neglect — like a crown jewel concealed in the humble cottage of an exiled queen.

When the conviction was brought home to both these

[1] Lightfoot, in his notes on Luke iii., maintains this theory, and quotes in support of it three passages from the Jerusalem Talmud, folio 77, 4, where Mary the mother of Jesus is denounced as the *daughter of Heli*, and mother of a pretender. The same view is sustained by Paulus, Spanheim, and Lange.

hidden souls that their house was to be the recipient of this greatest of all honors, we can easily see how it must have been a treasury of secret and wonderful emotions and contemplations between them. A world of lofty thought and feeling from that hour belonged to those two of all the world, separating them far as heaven is above the earth from the sordid neighborhood of Nazareth. Every tie which connected them with the royal house of David must have been wakened to intense vitality. All the prophecies with regard to the future Messiah must have blazed with a new radiance in the firmament of their thoughts. The decree from Cæsar that all the world should be taxed, and the consequent movement towards a census of the Jewish nation, must have seemed to them a divine call and intimation to leave the village of Nazareth and go to their ancestral town, where prophecy had told them that the Messiah was to be born: —

"And thou Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall come a Governor which shall rule my people Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

On this magnificent mystery were these two poor, obscure, simple people pondering in their hearts as they took their journey over the picturesque hill-country towards the beautiful little town of Bethlehem, the village of their fathers; Bethlehem, the city of the loving Ruth, and her descendant, the chivalrous poet king, David.

It seems they went there poor and without acquaintance, casting themselves in simple faith on the protection of God. The caravanserai of those days bore more resemblance to camping-huts than anything suggested by our modern inn. There was a raised platform which gave to the traveler simply space to spread his bed and lie down, while below this was the portion allotted to the feeding and accommodation of the animals.

When these two guests arrived the space allotted to travelers was all taken up, and a shelter had to be arranged in the part allotted to the animals. We are so accustomed to look at that cradle in Bethlehem through the mists of reverential tradition that we have ceased to realize what a trial and humiliation it was to these children of a royal race to find themselves outcasts and homeless in the city of their fathers — in the very hour when home and its comfort were most needed. We must remember they had to live by faith as well as we. Though an angel had announced this coming child as the King of Israel, still their faith must have been severely tried to find themselves, as the hour of his birth approached, unwelcomed, forlorn, and rejected by men, in the very city of David.

The census in which they came to have their names enrolled was the last step in the humiliation of their nation; it was the preparation for their subjugation and taxation as a conquered tribe under the Roman yoke: and they, children of the royal house of David, were left to touch the very lowest descent of humiliation, outcasts from among men, glad to find a resting-place with the beasts of the stall.

Christ is called the Morning Star, and truly he rose in the very darkest hour of the night. The Friend of the outcast, the Care-taker of the neglected, the poor man's Helper, must needs be born thus.

But was there no message? Yes. In those very hills and valleys of Bethlehem where David kept his father's sheep were still shepherds abiding. The Psalms of David were there the familiar melodies; they lived by the valley and hill, as when he sang of old, —

"The Lord is my Shepherd;
I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;
He leadeth me beside the still waters."

These shepherds probably were poor men of a devout and simple faith, men who longed and prayed and waited for the consolation of Israel. Their daily toil was ennobled by religious associations. Jehovah himself was addressed as the

"Shepherd of Israel;
He that leadeth Joseph like a flock;
He that dwelleth between the cherubims."

It was to such souls as these, patient, laborious, prayerful, that the message came; that the Good Shepherd — the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls — was born. No comment can brighten or increase the solemn beauty of those simple words in which this story is told: —

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, Good-will toward men.

"And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

They received the reward of faith; having heard the heavenly message, they believed and acted upon it. They did not stop to question or reason about it. They did not say, "How can this be?" but "Let us go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass." And so it was that they were rewarded by seeing and hearing the wonders "as it was told unto them."

The visit of these simple, confiding souls doubtless cheered the patient hearts of the humble outcasts, and strengthened their faith.

If now it be asked, Why was all this so? we have only to answer that heaven is a very different world from our earth, and that heavenly ways of viewing people and things are wholly above those of earth. The apostle says that the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than man; that the things that are highly esteemed among men are abominations in the sight of God.

When a new king and a new kingdom were to be set up on earth, no pomp of man, no palace made with hands, was held worthy of him; few were the human hearts deemed worthy of the message, and these were people that the world knew not of — simple-minded, sincere, loving, prayerful people.

The priests and scribes were full of national pride and bitterness, burning for revenge on the Romans, longing for conquest and power. They were impatiently waiting for the Leader whose foot should be on the necks of their enemies. They had no sense of sin, no longing for holiness, no aspirations for a Spiritual Deliverer; and therefore no message was sent to them.

But to the simple-minded Joseph the angel said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus (Saviour) for he shall save his people from their sins." Not from the Romans but from their sins he came to save, and the message of his coming was to humble souls, who wanted this kind of salvation.

But there was a fitness furthermore in these circumstances. Up to this time the poor and the unfortunate had been the despised of the earth. It had been predicted again and again that the Messiah should be the especial Friend of the poor : —

"He shall deliver the needy when he crieth,
The poor and him that hath no helper.
He shall spare the soul of the needy,
And precious shall their blood be in his sight."

As a mother when seeking a lost and helpless child, outcast in some den of misery, would pass by palaces and refuse the shelter of luxurious roofs, to share the poverty of her beloved, so the poor man's Friend and Lord chose to come in the hut and the stable rather than in the palace, that he might be known forever as the God of the poor, the Patron of the neglected, and the Shepherd of the lost.

IV

THE BLESSED WOMAN

There was one woman whom the voice of a divine Messenger, straight from heaven, pronounced highly favored. In what did this favor consist?

Of noble birth, of even royal lineage, she had fallen into poverty and obscurity. The great, brilliant, living world of her day knew her as the rushing equipages and palatial mansions of our great cities know the daughters of poor mechanics in rural towns.

There was plenty of splendor, and rank, and fashion in Jerusalem then. Herod the Great was a man of cultivation and letters, and beautified the temple with all sorts of architectural embellishments; and there were High Priests, and Levites, and a great religious aristocracy

circling about its precincts, all of whom, if they thought of any woman as highly favored of heaven, would have been likely to think of somebody quite other than the simple country girl of Nazareth. Such an one as she was not in all their thoughts. Yet she was *the* highly favored woman of the world; the crowned queen of women; the One whose lot — above that of all that have lived woman's life, before or since — was blessed.

The views adopted in the Roman Church with respect to this one Woman of women have tended to deprive the rest of the world of a great source of comfort and edification by reason of the opposite extreme to which Protestant reaction has naturally gone.

John Knox was once taken on board a ship manned, as he says, by Popish sailors, who gave into his hand an image of the Virgin Mary and wanted to compel him to kiss it. Stout John tossed it overboard, saying, "Let our Lady now save herself; she is light enough, let her learn to swim." To have honored the Virgin Mary, even in thought, was shrunk from by the Protestants of those times as an approach to idolatry. An image or a picture of her in a Puritan house would have been considered an approach to the sin of Achan. Truth has always had the fate of the shuttlecock between the conflicting battledoors of controversy.

This is no goddess crowned with stars, but something nobler, purer, fairer, more appreciable — the One highly favored and blessed among Women.

The happiness of Mary's lot was peculiar to womanhood. It lay mostly in the sphere of family affection. Mary had in this respect a lot whose blessedness was above every other mother. She had as her child the loveliest character that ever unfolded through childhood and youth to manhood. He was entirely her own. She had a security in possessing him such as is not accorded to other mothers. She knew that the child she adored was

not to die till he had reached man's estate — she had no fear that accident, or sickness, or any of those threatening causes which give sad hours to so many other mothers, would come between him and her.

Neither was she called to separate from him. The record shows that he was with his parents until their journey to Jerusalem, when he was twelve years old; and then, after his brief absence of three days when he was left behind, and found in the temple disputing with the doctors, we are told that "he went down to Nazareth and was subject unto them."

These words are all that cover eighteen years of the purest happiness ever given to mortal woman. To love, to adore, to possess the beloved object in perfect security, guarded by a divine promise — this blessedness was given to but one woman of all the human race. That peaceful home in Nazareth, overlooked by all the great, gay world, how many happy hours it had! Day succeeded day, weeks went to months, and months into years, and this is all the record: "Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man."

Looking at Jesus as a mere human being, a historical character, as some do, the one great peculiarity of him is the intensity of the personal affection he has been able to inspire. The Apostles give him one title which was his above all the other children of men, "The Beloved." Christ has been and now is beloved, as no other human being ever was. Others have been good men, — true men, benefactors of their race, — but when they died their personality faded from the earth.

Tell a Hottentot or a Zulu the story of Socrates, and it excites no very deep emotion; but, for eighteen hundred years, Hottentots, Zulus, South Sea Islanders and savages, Greenlanders, — men, women, and children in every land, with every variety of constitutional habit, — have con-

ceived such an ardent, passionate, personal love to Jesus of Nazareth that they have been ready to face torture and death for his sake.

"It is not for me to covet things visible or invisible," said Polycarp, on his way to martyrdom, "if only I may obtain Jesus Christ. The fire, the cross, the rush of wild beasts, the tearing asunder of bones, the fracture of limbs, and the grinding to powder of the whole body, let these, the devil's torments, come upon me, provided only that I obtain Jesus Christ."

So felt the Christians of the first ages, and time does not cool the ardor. There are at this present hour hundreds of thousands of obscure men and women, humble artisans, ignorant negroes, to whom Christ is dearer than life, and who would be capable of just this grand devotion. It is not many years since that in the Island of Madagascar Christian converts were persecuted, and there were those who met death for Christ's sake with all the triumphant fervor of primitive ages. Jesus has been the one man of whom it has been possible to say to people of all nations, ages, and languages, "Whom having not seen ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."

If we should embody our idea of the Son with whom Mary lived in secure intimacy for thirty years, we should call him Love, itself. He was not merely lovely, but he was love. He had a warming, creative power as to love. He gave birth to new conceptions of love; to a fervor, a devotion, a tenderness, of which before the human soul scarcely knew its own capacity.

Napoleon asserted the divinity of Jesus from the sole fact of his wonderful power of producing love. "I know men," he said, "and I know Jesus was not a man;— eighteen hundred years ago he died defeated, reviled, and yet at this hour there are thousands all over the world

who would die for him. I am defeated and overthrown, and who cares for me now? Who fights, who conquers for me? What an abyss between my misery and the triumph of Jesus!"

The blessedness of Mary was that she was the one human being who had the right of ownership and intimate oneness with the Beloved. For thirty years Jesus had only the task of living an average, quiet, ordinary human life. He was a humble artisan, peacefully working daily for the support of his mother. He was called from her by no public duty; he was hers alone. When he began his public career he transcended these limits. Then he declared that every soul that heard the will of God, and did it, should be to him as his mother — a declaration at which every Christian should veil his face in awe and gratitude.

We may imagine the peace, the joy, the serenity of that household of which Jesus was the centre. He read and explained the Scriptures, and he prayed with them, in such blessed words as those that are recorded in St. John's Gospel. In this life of simplicity and poverty he taught them that sweet and sacred secret of a peaceful daily looking to God for food and raiment that can be learned only by the poor and dependent. He made labor holy by choosing it as his lot.

Many little incidents in Christ's life show the man of careful domestic habits. He was in all things methodical and frugal. The miraculous power he possessed never was used to surround him with any profusion. He would have the fragments of the feast picked up and stored in the baskets, "that nothing should be lost." His illustrations show the habits of a frugal home. His parable of the kingdom of heaven, likened to the leaven hidden in three measures of meal, gives us to believe that doubtless he had often watched his mother in the homely process of bread-

making. The woman, who, losing one piece of money from her little store, lights a candle and searches diligently, brings to our mind the dwelling of the poor where every penny has its value. His illustrations from husbandry — ploughing, sowing, growing, the lost sheep, the ox fallen into the pit, the hen and her chickens — all show a familiarity and a kind sympathy with the daily habits and life interests of the poor. Many little touches indicate, also, the personal refinement and delicacy of his habits, the order and purity that extended to all his ways. While he repressed self-indulgence and the profusion of extravagant luxury, he felt keenly and justified bravely that profusion of the heart that delights in costliness as an expression of love.

There seems to be reason to think that the retirement and stillness of the peasant life in Nazareth, its deeply hidden character, was peculiarly suited to the constitutional taste both of Jesus and his mother.

Mary seems, from the little we see of her, to have been one of those silent, brooding women who seek solitude and meditation, whose thoughts are expressed only confidentially to congenial natures. There is every evidence that our Lord's individual and human nature was in this respect peculiarly sympathetic with that of his mother. The prophecy of Isaiah predicts this trait of his character: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." In the commencement of his ministry we find the same avoidance of publicity. He hushed the zeal of his disciples. He wrought miracles with injunctions of secrecy — "See thou tell no man." The rush of sensational popularity seemed especially distasteful to him, and we find him after a little retiring from it. "Come ye with me into a desert place and rest awhile," he says to his disciples, "for there were so many coming and going that they found no leisure so much as to eat."

Thus, the retirement of the Garden of Gethsemane — where it is said Jesus ofttimes resorted with his disciples — and the quietude of the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus at Bethany, seemed to be especially attractive to him. Indeed, so great a desire had he for quiet and peace, and for the calm of that congenial thought and communion that can be had with but a few, that his public life must be regarded as a constant act of self-abnegation. It was as foreign to him to be out in the hot glare and dust of publicity, and to battle in the crowded ways of life, as to the most gentle woman. Divine Love was ever, in this bustling, noisy, vulgar, outward life, lonely, and a stranger. "He was in the world," says St. John, "and the world was made by him, but the world knew him not."

There was one woman of all women to whom it was given to know him perfectly, entirely, intimately — to whom his nature was knit in the closest possible union and identity. He was bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh — his life grew out of her immortal nature. We are led to see in our Lord a peculiarity as to the manner of his birth which made him more purely sympathetic with his mother than any other son of woman. He had no mortal father. All that was human in him was her nature; it was the union of the divine nature with the nature of a pure woman. Hence there was in Jesus more of the pure feminine element than in any other man. It was the feminine element exalted and taken in union with divinity. Robertson has a very interesting sermon on this point, showing how the existence of this feminine element in the character of Jesus supplies all that want in the human heart to which it has been said the worship of the Virgin Mother was adapted. Christ, through his intimate relationship with this one highly favored among women, had the knowledge of all that the heart of man or woman can seek for its needs.

There is in the sacred narrative a reticence in regard to the mother of Jesus which would seem to bear very significantly upon any theories of their mutual relations, and especially upon their present connection in spiritual matters — the idea that Mary, as Mother of God, retains in heaven authority over her son, and that he can deny her nothing. St. John takes care to state specifically the scene in Cana of Galilee where Jesus informs his mother that, in his divine relations and duties, her motherly relation has no place. "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come."

The address, though not in the connection wanting in respect, or so abrupt as it appears in the translation, was still very decided, and was undoubtedly one of those declarations meant not only for her but for mankind. In the same spirit are his words where, in his public ministration, word was brought to him that his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to see him: —

"Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And he looked around on them that sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother."

From that noble utterance, the Song of Mary, — retained by the church as a Magnificat, — there is evidence of a soul not only exalted by genius and enthusiasm, but steeped in the traditions of ancient prophecy. It is so like the Psalms of David that a verse of it, if read out casually, might seem to be taken from them. There is no doubt that a soul like this, when possessed of the great secret of prophecy, devoted itself with ardor to all in the Hebrew Scriptures which foreshadowed her son's career. She was the first teacher of the child Jesus in the Law and the Prophets. One of Raphael's most beautiful conceptions of her represents her sitting thoughtfully, holding the hand of the infant Jesus, while the roll of the prophecies lies

in her lap, and her eyes are fixed on the distance as in deep thought. There is a similar picture of her by Palma Vecchio. The communings of Christ and his mother on these subjects must have been so long and so intimate that she more calmly and clearly knew exactly whither his life was tending than did his disciples. She had been forewarned in Daniel of the time when the Messiah was to be cut off, but not for himself; she understood, doubtless, the deep, hidden meaning of the Psalm that describes the last agonies, the utter abandonment of her son.

There is in her whole character a singular poise and calmness. When the Angel of the Annunciation appeared to her she was not overcome by the presence of a spiritual being as Daniel was, who records that "he fell on his face and there was no strength in him." Mary, in calm and firm simplicity, looks the angel in the face, and ponders what the wonderful announcement may mean. When she finds that it really does mean that she, a poor lonely maiden, is the chosen woman of all the human race — the gainer of the crown of which every Jewish woman had dreamed for ages — she is still calm. She does not sink under the honor, she is not confused or overcome, but answers with gentle submission, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to his word."

Yet the words of the Magnificat show a keen sense of the honor and favor done her. She exults in it with an innocent heartiness of simplicity. "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaid, for from henceforth all nations shall call me blessed."

It is remarkable that Mary was never in any one instance associated in public work with Jesus. She was not among the women who are mentioned as following and ministering unto him. She was, it seems, in Jerusalem at the last Passover of our Lord, but it was not with her, or at her table, that he prepared to eat the Passover. He

did that as master in his own house, with a family of little children of his own choosing. Mary was not at the first Eucharistic feast. Undoubtedly there was foreknowledge and divine design in all this, and doubtless Jesus and Mary were so completely one in will and purpose that she was of perfect accord with him in all these arrangements. There are souls so perfectly attuned to each other, with such an exact understanding and sympathy, that personal presence no longer becomes a necessity. They are always with each other in spirit, however outwardly separated. But we find her with him once more, openly and visibly, in the hour when all others forsook him. The delicacy of woman may cause her to shrink from the bustle of public triumph, but when truth and holiness are brought to public scorn she is there to defend, to suffer, to die.

Can we conceive what this mob was, that led Jesus forth to death? Mobs in our day are brutal, but what were they then? Consider what the times must have been when scourging was an ordinary punishment for criminals, and crucifixion an ordinary mode of execution; what were the sights, the sounds, the exhibitions of brutality among which Mary and the women friends of Jesus followed him to the cross!

And Mary did not faint — did not sink. She did not fall to the earth when an angel predicted her glory; she did not fall now, when the sword had gone through her heart. It is all told in one word, "Now there *stood* by the cross of Jesus his mother." The last word that Jesus spoke to any mortal ear was to commend her to his dearest friend.

After the resurrection Mary appears once more among the disciples, waiting and praying for a descent of the Holy Ghost — and then in the sacred record we hear of her no more.

But enough is recorded of her to make her forever dear to all Christian hearts. That Mary is now with Jesus,

that there is an intimacy and sympathy between her soul and his such as belong to no other created being, seems certain. Nor should we suffer anything to prevent that just love and veneration which will enable us to call her Blessed, and to look forward to meeting her in heaven as one of the brightest joys of that glorious world.

V

THE HOLY CHILDHOOD

In the first recorded public prayer of the Apostles after the resurrection of our Lord he is called "Thy Holy Child Jesus."

The expression is a very beautiful one if we couple it with the Master's declaration that the greatest in the kingdom of heaven is the most like a little child, and that to become as a little child is the first step toward fitness for the knowledge of spiritual things.

There has been in this world one rare flower of Paradise, — a holy childhood growing up gradually into a holy manhood, and always retaining in mature life the precious, unstained memories of perfect innocence. The family at Nazareth was evidently a secluded one. Persons of such an elevated style of thought as Joseph and Mary, conscious of so solemn a destiny and guarding with awe the treasure and hope of a world, must have been so altogether different from the ordinary peasants of Nazareth that there could have been little more than an external acquaintance between them. They were undoubtedly loving, gentle, and tender to every one, full of sympathy for trouble and of kind offices in sickness, but they carried within their hearts a treasury of thoughts, emotions, and hopes, which could not be perceived by those whose spiritual eyes had

never been opened. It is quite evident from the surprise that the Nazarenes manifested when Christ delivered his first sermon among them that they had never seen anything unusual in the family, and that Christ himself had been living among them only as the carpenter's son. This case is not peculiar. The great artist or poet often grows to manhood without one of his townspeople suspecting who he is, and what world he lives in. Milton or Raphael might so have grown up unknown in a town of obscure fishermen.

The apocryphal gospels have busied themselves in inventing legends of this child-life of Jesus. Nothing so much shows the difference between the false and the true as these apocryphal gospels compared with the real. Jesus is represented there as a miraculous child, using supernatural power for display among his schoolmates and for the gratification of childish piques and resentments.

The true gospel gives but one incident of the child-life of Jesus, and that just at the time when childhood is verging into youth; for the rest, we are left to conjecture.

We are told that his infancy was passed in the land of Egypt. Jesus was the flower of his nation, — he was the blossom of its history, — and therefore it seemed befitting that his cradle should be where was the cradle of his great forerunner, Moses, on the banks of the Nile. The shadows of the Pyramids, built by the labors of his ancestors, were across the land of his childhood, and the great story of their oppression and deliverance must have filled the thoughts and words of his parents. So imbued was the Jewish mind with the habit of seeing in everything in their history the prophecy and type of the great Fulfiller, that St. Matthew speaks of this exile in Egypt as having occurred that the type might find completeness, and that Israel, in the person of its Head and Representative, might a second time be called out of Egypt: —

"That it might be fulfilled that was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,

"Out of Egypt have I called my son."

We do not know with any definiteness the length of this sojourn in Egypt, nor how much impression the weird and solemn scenery and architecture of Egypt may have made upon the susceptible mind of the child; but to the parents it must have powerfully and vividly recalled all that ancient and prophetic literature which in every step pointed to their wonderful son. The earliest instructions of Jesus must have been in this history and literature of his own nation — a literature unique, poetic, and sublime. But we have no tidings of him till that time in his history when, according to the customs of his people, he was of age to go up to the great national festival at Jerusalem.

The young Jewish boy was instructed all the earlier years of his life in view of this great decisive step, which, like confirmation in the Christian Church, ranked him as a fully admitted member of the house of Israel. It was customary to travel to Jerusalem in large companies or caravans, beguiling the way with hymns of rejoicing as they drew nigh to the holy city. Jesus, probably, was one of many boys who for the first time were going up to their great national festival.

One incident only of this journey is given, but that a very striking one. After the feast was over, when the caravan was returning, they passed a day's journey on their way without perceiving that the child was not among the travelers. This — in a large company of kinsfolk and acquaintance, and where Jesus might have been, as he always afterward seemed to be, a great personal favorite — was quite possible. His parents, trusting him wholly, and feeling that he was happy among friends, gave themselves no care till the time of the evening encampment. Then, discovering their loss, they immediately retraced

their steps the next day to Jerusalem, inquiring for him vainly among their acquaintances. They at last turned their steps toward the outer courts of the temple, where was the school of the learned Rabbins who explained the law of God. There, seated at their feet, eager and earnest, asking them questions and hearing their answers, the child Jesus had awakened to a new and deeper life, and become so absorbed as to forget time, place, friends, and everything else in the desire to understand the Holy Word.

It is a blot upon this beautiful story to speak of Jesus as "disputing" with the teachers of his nation, or setting himself up to instruct them. His position was that of a learner; we are not told that he asserted anything, but that he listened and asked questions. The questions of a pure child are often the most searching that can be asked; the questions of the holy child Jesus must have penetrated to the very deepest of divine mysteries. Those masterly discussions of the sayings of the Rabbins, which years after appeared in the Sermon on the Mount, may have sprung from seeds thus dropped into the childish mind.

But, while he is thus absorbed and eager, his soul burning with newly kindled enthusiasm, suddenly his parents, agitated and distressed, lay hold on him with tender reproach: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing."

Jesus answers, as he so often did in after life, as speaking almost unconsciously out of some higher sphere, and in higher language than that of earth: "How is it that ye sought me? Did ye not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

It seemed to say, "Why be alarmed? is not this my Father's house; is not this study of his law my proper work; and where should I be but here?"

But immediately it is added, "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them." Even Christ pleased not himself; the holiest fire, the divinest passion, was made subject to the heavenly order, and immediately he yielded to the father and mother whom God had made his guides an implicit obedience.

We have here one glimpse of a consuming ardor, a burning enthusiasm, which lay repressed and hidden for eighteen years more, till the Father called him to speak.

That simple, natural utterance in the child's mouth — "My Father" — shows the secret of the holy peace which kept him happy in waiting. The Father was a serene presence, an intimate and inward joy. In the beautiful solitudes about Nazareth the divine benediction came down upon him: —

"I will be as the dew to Israel:
He shall grow as the lily,
And cast forth his roots as Lebanon."

These two natural symbols seem fittest to portray the elements of that holy childhood which grew to holiest manhood. They give us, as its marked characteristics, the shining purity of the lily and the grand strength and stability of the cedars of Lebanon.

VI

GENTILE PROPHECIES OF CHRIST

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, behold there came wise men to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

Was the Messiah to be the King of the Jews alone? No; he was for the world; he was the Good Shepherd of

nations, and declared that he had "other sheep, not of this fold."

It seems to be most striking that, in the poetical and beautiful account of the birth of Jesus, there is record of two distinct classes who come to pay him homage — not only the simple-minded and devout laboring people of the Jews, but also the learned sages of the Gentiles.

There are constant intimations throughout the Old Testament that God's choice of the Jews was no favoritism; that he had not forgotten other races, but was still the God and Father of mankind; and that he chose Israel not to aggrandize one people, but to make that people his gift-bearers to the whole world.

There are distinct evidences in the Old Testament that the coming Saviour was caring for others beside the Jewish race. Witness his gracious promise to the slave Hagar that he would bless her descendants. In the very family line from which Messiah was to be born a loving and lovely Moabite woman was suffered to be introduced as the near ancestress of King David, and the name of the Gentile Ruth stands in the genealogy of Jesus as a sort of intimation that he belonged not to a race but to the world. In a remarkable passage of Isaiah (xliv. 28, xlv. 1, 4, 5) Jehovah, proclaiming his supreme power, declares himself to be He

"That saith of Cyrus —
He is my shepherd,
He shall perform all my pleasure.
Even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built;
And to the Temple, Thy foundations shall be laid.
Thus saith the Lord to his anointed,
To Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden.
. . . . . .
For Jacob my servant's sake,
For Israel mine elect,
I have called thee by my name:

I have surnamed thee, *though thou hast not known me.*
I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me:
I girded thee, though thou hast not known me."

The Babylonian captivity answered other purposes beside the punishment and restoration of the Jewish nation to the worship of the true God. It was a sort of prophetic "Epiphany," in which the Messianic aspirations of the Jews fell outside of their own nation, like sparks of fire on those longings which were common to the human race. Even the Jewish prophet spoke of the Messiah as "The Desire of all Nations."

And this desire and the hope of its fulfillment were burning fervently in the souls of all the best of the Gentile nations; for not among the Jews alone, but among all the main races and peoples of antiquity, have there been prophecies and traditions more or less clear of a Being who should redeem the race of man from the power of evil and bring in an era of peace and love.

The yearning, suffering heart of humanity formed to itself such a conception out of its own sense of need. Poor helpless man felt himself an abandoned child, without a Father, in a scene of warring and contending forces. The mighty, mysterious, terrible God of nature was a being that he could not understand, felt unable to question. Job in his hour of anguish expressed the universal longing: —

"Oh that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to his seat, I would order my cause before him, I would fill my mouth with arguments. Would he plead against me with his great power? Nay, but he would put strength in me."

And again: —

"He is not a man as I am that I should answer him, and that we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman that might lay his hand on both of us."

It was for this Mediator, both divine and human, who should interpret the silence of God to man, who should be his WORD to his creatures, that all humanity was sighing. Therefore it was that the first vague promise was a seed of hope, not only in the Jewish race, but in all other nations of the earth.

One of the earliest and most beautiful prophecies of the coming Messiah is from the heathen astrologer, Balaam: —

"Balaam the son of Beor saith,
The man whose eyes are open, saith,
He which heard the word of God
And knew the knowledge of the Most High,
Which saw the vision of the Almighty,
Falling into a trance and having his eyes open:
I shall see HIM, but not now.
I shall behold HIM, but not nigh.
There shall come a STAR out of Jacob,
A sceptre shall rise out of Israel.
Out of Jacob shall come HE that shall have dominion!"

Of late there has been discovered in Nineveh a large work on the system of magic of the Chaldee soothsayers, written on tiles of baked clay, in the "arrow-head" characters. Here we have a minute account of the Chaldeans — the astrologers and the sorcerers spoken of in Daniel — with specimens of their liturgic forms and invocations. M. Lenormant, who has issued a minute account of this work with translations of many parts of it, gives an interesting account of the religious ideas of the Chaldees in the very earliest period of antiquity, as old or older than that of the soothsayer Balaam.

He says the supreme divinity, whom they called EA, was regarded as too remote and too vast to be approached by human prayer, and that he was to be known only through the medium of another divinity, his first-begotten Son, to whom is given a name signifying the Benefactor of Man. The prayers and ascriptions to this divinity remind

us of the Old Testament addresses to the Messiah. The Hebrew poet says: —

"Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth,
And the heavens are the work of thy hands."

The ancient invocation upon the tiles of Nineveh addressed to the Mediator runs thus: —

"Great Lord of earth! King of all lands,
First-begotten Son of Ea,
Director of heaven and earth,
Most merciful among the gods,
Thou who restorest the dead to life."

. . . . . .

We see here the reflection of a Being such as the contemporaries of Abraham in the land of the Chaldees must have looked forward to — an image of that diffused and general faith which pervaded the world in the days when the patriarch was called to be the Father of a peculiar people.

In the Zendavesta — begun about the age of Daniel — also are traces of the same Being, with prophecies of his future appearance on earth to restore the human race to peace and goodness.

In one of the Zend books we have a passage strikingly like some of the prophetic parts of Daniel. As Nebuchadnezzar saw the future history of the world under the form of an image, made of four precious metals, so Zoroaster was made to see the same under the image of a tree in which four trunks proceed from a common root. The first was a golden, the second a silver, the third a steel, and the fourth an iron one.

In the same manner as in Daniel, these trees are interpreted as successive monarchies of the earth. The last, the iron one, was to be the dominion of demons and dark powers of evil, and after it was to come the SAVIOUR, or SOSIOSCH (a *Zend* word), who was to bring in the restitu-

tion of all things from the power of evil, and the resurrection of the dead.[1]

The same ideas were expressed in the Sibylline oracles. The story of the Sibyl who offered her books to Tarquin, in the early days of Rome, is known to every child who studies Roman history. From the remains of these writings, still extant, they appear to contain predictions of the world's future, much resembling those of Daniel and Isaiah. They predict the coming of a Great Deliverer of the human race, a millennium of righteousness, a resurrection of the dead, and a Day of Judgment.

About forty years before the birth of Christ, Virgil wrote his beautiful Eclogue of Pollio. The birthplace of Virgil was near the town of Cumæ, where lived the Cumæan Sibyl, and her traditionary history and her writings must have deeply impressed his mind. Possibly he only thought of them as a poet thinks of a fine theme for the display of poetic imagery; and possibly he may have meant to make of this eclogue a complimentary prophecy of some patron among the powerful of his times. But when we remember that it was published only about forty years before the birth of Christ, and that no other historical character corresponding to this prediction ever appeared, it becomes, to say the least, a remarkable coincidence.

Bishop Lowth says that the mystery of this eclogue has never been solved, and intimates that he would scarcely dare to express some of the suppositions which it has inspired.

May not Virgil, like Balaam, have been carried beyond himself in the trance of poetic inspiration, and seen afar the "Star" that should arise out of Israel? He too might have exclaimed: —

[1] These passages are quoted and commented on by Hilgenfeld on the *Apocalyptic Literature of the Hebrews*, and Lücke on the *Apocalypse of St. John*.

"I shall see him, but not now.
I shall behold him, but not nigh."

The words of Virgil have a fire and fervor such as he seems to have had in no other composition, as he sings: —

"The last age of the Cumæan song is come.
The great cycle of ages hastens to a new beginning.
Now, too, returns the reign of Justice.
The golden age of Saturn now returns.
While thou, Pollio, art consul,
This glory of our age shall make his appearance.
The great months begin to roll.
He shall partake of the life of the gods,
And rule the peaceful world with his father's virtues."

Then follow a profusion of images of peace and plenty that should come to the world in the reign of this hero. All poisonous and hurtful things shall die; all rare and beautiful ones shall grow and abound; there shall be no more toil, no more trouble. Then, with a fine burst of imagery, the poet represents the Fates themselves as singing, to the whirring music of their spindles, a song of welcome: —

"Ye ages, hasten!
Dear offspring of the gods, set forward on thy way to highest honors;
The time is at hand.
See, the world with its round weight bows to thee.
To thee bow the earth, the regions of the sea and heaven sublime.
See how all things rejoice at the approach of this age!
O that my life might last to see and sing thy deeds!"

The close of this eclogue has a mysterious tenderness. The poet predicts that this sublime personage, for whom the world is waiting, should be born amidst the afflictions of his parents and under a cloud of poverty and neglect: —

"Come, little boy, and know thy mother with a smile.
Come, little boy, on whom thy parents smile not,
Whom no god honors with a table,
No goddess with a cradle."

It would seem as if the sensitive soul of Virgil, in the ecstasy of poetic inspiration, acquired a vague clairvoyance of that scene at Bethlehem when there was no room for Joseph and Mary at the inn, and the Heir of all things lay in a manger, outcast and neglected.

Not in Virgil alone, but scattered also here and there through all antiquity, do we find vague, half-prophetic aspirations after the divine Teacher who should interpret God to man, console under the sorrows of life, and charm away the fears of death. In the Phædo, when Socrates is comforting his sorrowful disciples in view of his approaching death, and setting before them the probabilities of a continued life beyond the grave, one of them tells him that they believe while they hear him, but when he is gone their doubts will all return, and says, "Where shall we find a charmer then to disperse our fears?" Socrates answers that such a Charmer will yet arise, and bids his disciples seek him in all lands of the earth. Greece, he says, is wide, and there are many foreign lands and even barbarous countries in which they should travel searching for Him, for there is nothing for which they could more reasonably spend time and money.

And in the discourse of Socrates with Alcibiades, as given by Plato, the great philosopher is represented as saying, "We must wait till One shall teach us our duty towards gods and men."

Alcibiades asks, "When, O Socrates, shall that time come, and who will be the Teacher? Most happy should I be to see this man, whoever he is." The Sage replies, "He is One who is concerned for thee. He feels for thee an admirable regard."

When one reads these outreachings for an unknown Saviour in the noblest minds of antiquity, it gives pathos and suggestive power to that emotion which our Lord manifested only a few days before his death, when word

was brought him that there were certain *Greeks* desiring to see him. When the message was brought to him he answered with a burst of exultation, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified! Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit, and I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me!"

He was indeed the "Teacher" who had been "concerned" for Alcibiades, who had cared for Socrates. He was the "Charmer" whom Socrates bade his disciples seek above all things. He was the unknown bringer of good for whom Virgil longed. He was the "Star" of Balaam, the "Benefactor" of the Chaldee astrologers, the "Saviour" predicted by the Persian Zoroaster. He was, it is true, the Shepherd of Israel, but he had a heart for the "*other* sheep not of this fold," who were scattered through all nations of the earth. He belonged not to any nation, but to the world, and hence aptly and sublimely did the last prophecy proclaim, "The desire of all nations shall come!"

VII

THE HIDDEN YEARS OF CHRIST

One great argument for the divine origin of the mission of Jesus is its utter unlikeness to the wisdom and ways of this world. From beginning to end, it ignored and went contrary to all that human schemes for power would have advised.

It was first announced, not to the great or wise, but to the poor and unlettered. And when the holy child, predicted by such splendid prophecies, came and had been adored by the shepherds and magi, had been presented in the temple and blessed by Simeon and Anna — what then?

Suddenly he disappears from view. He is gone, no one knows whither — hid in a distant land.

In time the parents return and settle in an obscure village. Nobody knows them, nobody cares for them, and the child grows up as the prophet predicted, "As a tender plant, a root out of dry ground;" the lonely lily of Nazareth.

And then there were thirty years of silence, when nobody thought of him and nobody expected anything from him. There was time for Zacharias and Elisabeth and Simeon and Anna to die; for the shepherds to cease talking of the visions; for the wise ones of the earth to say, "Oh, as to that child, it was nothing at all! He is gone. Nobody knows where he is. You see it has all passed by — a mere superstitious excitement of a few credulous people."

And during these hidden years what was Jesus doing? We have no record. It was said by the Apostle that "in all respects it behooved him to be made like his brethren." Before the full splendor of his divine gifts and powers descended upon him, it was necessary that he should first live an average life, such as the great body of human beings live. For, of Christ as he was during the three years of his public life, it could not be said that he was in all respects in our situation or experiencing our trials. He had unlimited supernatural power; he could heal the sick, raise the dead, hush the stormy waters, summon at his will legions of angels. A being of such power could not be said to understand exactly the feelings of our limitations and weaknesses. But those years of power were only three in the life of our Lord; for thirty years he chose to live the life of an obscure human being.

Jesus prepared for his work among men by passing through the quiet experience of a workingman in the lower orders. The tradition of the church is that Joseph, being much older than Mary, died while Jesus was yet young,

and thus the support of his mother devolved upon him. Overbeck has a very touching picture in which he represents Joseph as breathing his last on the bosom of Jesus; it is a sketch full of tenderness and feeling.

What balance of mind, what reticence and self-control, what peace resulting from deep and settled faith, is there in this history, and what a cooling power it must have to the hot and fevered human heart that burns in view of the much that is to be done to bring the world right!

Nothing was ever so strange, so visionary, to all human view so utterly and ridiculously hopeless of success, as the task that Jesus meditated during the thirty years when he was quietly busy over his carpenter's bench in Nazareth. Hundreds of years before, the prophet Daniel saw, in a dream, a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, growing till it filled the earth. Thus the ideal kingdom of Jesus grew in the silence and solitude of his own soul till it became a power and a force before which all other forces of the world have given way. The Christian religion was the greatest and most unprecedented reform ever introduced.

In the present age of the world, the whole movement and uneasiness and convulsion of what is called progress comes from the effort to adjust existing society to the principles laid down by Jesus. The Sermon on the Mount was, and still is, the most disturbing and revolutionary document in the world.

This being the case, what impresses us most in the character of Jesus, as a reformer, is the atmosphere of peacefulness that surrounded him, and in which he seemed to live and move and have his being.

Human beings as reformers are generally agitated, hurried, impatient. Scarcely are the spirits of the prophets subject to the prophets. They are liable to run before the proper time and season, to tear open the bud that

ought to unfold; they become nervous, irascible, and lose mental and physical health: and, if the reform on which they have set their heart fails, they are overwhelmed with discouragement and tempted to doubt divine Providence.

Let us now look at Jesus. How terrible was the state of the world at the time when he began to reflect upon it in his unfolding youth! How much was there to be done! What darkness, cruelty, oppression, confusion! Yet he, knowing that that was the work of reorganizing, showed no haste. Thirty years was by Jewish law the appointed time at which a religious teacher should commence his career. Jesus apparently felt no impulse to antedate this period; one incident alone, in his childhood, shows him carried away beyond himself by the divine ardor which filled his soul.

Even then, his answers to his mother showed the consciousness of a divine and wonderful mission such as belonged only to one of the human race, and it is immediately added, "And he went down to Nazareth and was subject to them." Eighteen years now passed away and nothing was known of the enthusiastic spirit. When he appears in the synagogue at Nazareth, he is spoken of simply as "the carpenter." "How knoweth this man letters?" was the cry of his townsmen.

Nothing shows more strongly the veiled and hidden and perfectly quiet life that Jesus had been leading among them. He had been a carpenter, not a teacher. The humble, calm, unobtrusive life of a good mechanic, who does every day's duty in its time and place, is not a thing that calls out any attention in a community. There are many followers of Jesus in this world who are living the same silent, quiet life, who would not be missed in the great world if they were gone, who, being always in place and time, and working without friction or jar, come to be as much disregarded as the daily perfect work of nature.

The life of Jesus must also have been a silent one. Of all the things that he must have been capable of saying we find not one recorded. And the wonder of his townsmen at his capacity of speech shows that there had been no words spoken by him before to accustom them to it.

In our Saviour's public career we are surprised at nothing so much as his calmness. He was never in haste. His words have all the weight of deliberation, and the occasions when he refrains from speech are fully as remarkable as the things he says.

There seems to be about him none of the wearying anxiety as to immediate results, none of the alternations of hope and discouragement that mark our course. He had faith in God, whose great plan he was working, whose message he came to deliver, and whose times and seasons he strictly regarded. So, too, did he regard the mental and spiritual condition of the imperfect ones by whom he was surrounded. "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now," he said even to his disciples. When their zeal transcended his, and they longed to get hold of the thunderbolts and call down fire from heaven, his grave and steady rebuke recalled them: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

We see his disciples excited, ardent, — now coming back with triumph to tell how even the devils were subject to them, now forbidding one to cast out devils because he followed not them, now contending who should be greatest; and among them sits the Master, lowly, thoughtful, tranquil, with the little child on his knee, or bending to wash the feet of a disciple, the calmest, sweetest, least assuming of them all.

This should be the model of all Christian reformers. He that believeth shall not make haste is the true motto of Christian reform.

And these great multitudes, to whose hands no special,

individual power is given — they are only minute workers in a narrower sphere. Daily toils, small economies, the ordering of the material cares of life, are all their lot. Before them in their way they can see the footsteps of Jesus. We can conceive that in the lowly path of his life all his works were perfect, that never was a nail driven or a line laid carelessly, and that the toil of that carpenter's bench was as sacred to him as his teachings in the temple, because it was duty.

Sometimes there is a sadness and discontent, a repressed eagerness for some higher sphere, that invades the minds of humble workers. Let them look unto Jesus, and be content. All they have to do is to be "faithful over a few things," and in his own time he will make them "ruler over many things."

VIII

THE PRAYER-LIFE OF JESUS

The Bible presents us with the personality of a magnificent Being — the only-begotten Son of God — who, being in the form of God and without robbery equal with God, emptied himself of his glory and took upon him the form of a servant; and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself and became obedient to death — even the death of the cross.

This great Being, we are told, entered the race of mortality, divested of those advantages which came from his divine origin, and assuming all those disadvantages of limitation and dependence which belong to human beings. The Apostle says, "It behooved him in all respects to be made like unto his brethren." His lot was obedience — dependence upon the Father — and he gained victories by just the means which are left to us — faith and prayer.

Now, there are many good people whose feeling about prayer is something like this: "I pray because I am commanded to, not because I feel a special need or find a special advantage in it. In my view we are to use our intellect and our will in discovering duties and overcoming temptations, quite sure that God will, of course, aid those who aid themselves." This class of persons look upon all protracted seasons of prayer and periods spent in devotion as so much time taken from the active duties of life. A week devoted to prayer, a convention of Christians meeting to spend eight or ten days in exercises purely devotional, would strike them as something excessive and unnecessary, and tending to fanaticism.

If ever there was a human being who could be supposed able to meet the trials of life and overcome its temptations in his own strength, it must have been Jesus Christ.

But his example stands out among all others, and he is shown to us as peculiarly a man of prayer. The wonderful quietude and reticence of spirit in which he awaited the call of his Father to begin his great work has already been noticed. He waited patiently, living for thirty years the life of a common human being of the lower grades of society, and not making a single movement to display either what may be called his natural gifts, of teaching, etc., or those divine powers which were his birthright. Having taken the place of a servant, as a servant he waited the divine call.

When that call came he consecrated himself to his great work by submitting to the ordinance of baptism. We are told that as he went up from the waters of baptism, praying, the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost descended upon him, and a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased."

Might we not think that now the man Jesus Christ would feel fully prepared to begin at once the work to

which God so visibly called him? But no. The divine Spirit within him led to a still farther delay. More than a month's retreat from all the world's scenes and ways, a period of unbroken solitude, was devoted to meditation and prayer.

If Jesus Christ deemed so much time spent in prayer needful to his work, what shall we say of ourselves? Feeble and earthly, with hearts always prone to go astray, living in a world where everything presses us downward to the lower regions of the senses and passions, how can we afford to neglect that higher communion, those seasons of divine solitude, which were thought necessary by our Master? It was in those many days devoted entirely to communion with God that he gained strength to resist the temptations of Satan, before which we so often fall. Whatever we may think of the mode and manner of that mysterious account of the temptations of Christ, it is evident that they were met and overcome by the spiritual force gained by prayer and the study of God's word.

But it was not merely in this retirement of forty days that our Lord set us the example of the use of seasons of religious seclusion. There is frequent mention made in the Gospels of his retiring for purposes of secret prayer. In the midst of the popularity and success that attended his first beneficent miracles, we are told by St. Mark that, "rising up a great while before day, he went out into a solitary place and there prayed." His disciples went to look for him, and found him in his retirement, and brought him back with the message, "All men are seeking for thee." In Luke v. 16, it is said: "He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed;" and on another occasion (Luke iv. 42), he says: "And when it was day, he departed and went into a desert place." Again, when preparing to take the most important step in his ministry, the choice of his twelve Apostles, we read in Luke vi. 12:

"And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued *all night* in prayer to God; and when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles."

It was when his disciples found him engaged in prayer, and listened for a little while to his devotions, that they addressed to him the petition, "Lord, teach *us* to pray." Might we not all, in view of his example, address to him the same prayer? Surely if there is anything in which Christ's professed disciples need to learn of him it is in prayer.

Not only in example but in teaching did he exhort to prayer. "Watch and pray" were words so often upon his lips that they may seem to be indeed the watchwords of our faith. He bids us retire to our closets and with closed door pray to our Father in secret. He says that men "ought always to pray and not to faint," though the answer be delayed. He reasons from what all men feel of parental longings in granting the requests of their little children, and says, "If ye, being evil, are so ready to hear your children, how much more ready will your Father in heaven be to give good things to them that ask him." Nay, he uses a remarkable boldness in urging us to be importunate in presenting our requests, again and again, in the face of apparent delay and denial. He shows instances where even indifferent or unjust people are overcome by sheer importunity, and intimates how much greater must be the power of importunity — urgent, pressing solicitation — on a Being always predisposed to benevolence.

By all these methods and illustrations our Lord incites us to follow his prayerful example, and to overcome, as he overcame, by prayer. The Christian Church felt so greatly the need of definite seasons devoted to religious

retirement that there grew up among them the custom now so extensively observed in Christendom, of devoting forty days in every year to a special retreat from the things of earth, and a special devotion to the work of private and public prayer. Like all customs, even those originating in deep spiritual influences, this is too apt to degenerate into a mere form. Many associate no ideas with "fasting" except a change in articles of food. The true spiritual fasting, which consists in turning our eyes and hearts from the engrossing cares and pleasures of earth and fixing them on things divine, is lost sight of. Our "forty days" are not like our Lord's, given to prayer and the study of God's Word. Nothing could make the period of Lent so much of a reality as to employ it in a systematic effort to fix the mind on Jesus. The history in the Gospels is so well worn that it often slips through the head without affecting the heart.

But if, retiring into solitude for a portion of each day, we should select some one scene or trait or incident in the life of Jesus, and with all the helps we can get seek to understand it fully, tracing it in the other evangelists, comparing it with other passages of Scripture, etc., we should find ourselves insensibly interested, and might hope that in this effort of our souls to understand him, Jesus himself would draw near, as he did of old to the disciples on the way to Emmaus.

This looking unto Jesus and thinking about him is a better way to meet and overcome sin than any physical austerities or spiritual self-reproaches. It is by looking at him, the Apostle says, "as in a glass," that we are "changed into the same image, as from glory to glory."

IX

THE TEMPTATIONS OF JESUS

Intimately connected with the forty days of solitude and fasting is the mysterious story of the Temptation.

We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that our Lord was exposed to a peculiar severity of trial in order that he might understand the sufferings and wants of us feeble human beings. "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor those who are tempted." We are to understand, then, that however divine was our Lord's nature in his preëxistent state, he chose to assume our weakness and our limitations, and to meet and overcome the temptations of Satan by just such means as are left to us — by faith and prayer and the study of God's Word.

There are many theories respecting this remarkable history of the temptation. Some suppose the Evil Spirit to have assumed a visible form, and to have been appreciably present. But if we accept the statement we have quoted from the Epistle to the Hebrews, that our Lord was tempted in all respects as we are, it must have been an invisible and spiritual presence with which he contended. The temptations must have presented themselves to him, as to us, by thoughts injected into his mind.

It seems probable that, of many forms of temptation which he passed through, the three of which we are told are selected as specimens, and if we notice we shall see that they represent certain great radical sources of trial to the whole human race.

First comes the temptation from the cravings of animal appetite. Perhaps hunger — the want of food and the weakness and faintness resulting from it — brings more

temptation to sin than any other one cause. To supply animal cravings men are driven to theft and murder, and women to prostitution. The more fortunate of us, who are brought up in competence and shielded from want, cannot know the fierceness of this temptation — its driving, maddening power. But he who came to estimate our trials, and to help the race of man in their temptations, chose to know what the full force of the pangs of hunger were, and to know it in the conscious possession of miraculous power which could at any moment have supplied them. To have used this power for the supply of his wants would have been at once to abandon that very condition of trial and dependence which he came to share with us. It was a sacred trust, not given for himself but for the world. It was the very work he undertook, to bear the trials which his brethren bore as they were called to bear them, with only such helps as it might please the Father to give him in his own time and way.

So when the invisible tempter suggested that he might at once relieve this pain and gratify this craving, he answered simply that there was a higher life than the animal, and that man could be upborne by faith in God even under the pressure of utmost want. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." How many poor, suffering followers of Christ, called to forsake the means of livelihood for conscience' sake, have been obliged to live as Christ did on the simple promise of God, and to wait. Such sufferers may feel that they are not called to this trial by one ignorant of its nature or unsympathetic with their weakness. And the same consolation applies to all who struggle with the lower wants of our nature in any form. Christ's pity and sympathy are for them.

All who struggle with animal desires in any form, which duty forbids them to gratify, may remember that God has

given them an Almighty Saviour, who, having suffered, is able to succor those that are tempted.

The second trial was no less universal. It was the temptation to use his sacred and solemn gifts from God for purposes of personal ostentation and display. "Why not," suggests the tempter, "descend from the pinnacle of the temple upborne by angels? How striking a manifestation of the power of the Son of God!" To this came the grave answer, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God," — by needlessly incurring a danger which would make miraculous deliverance necessary.

Is no one in our day put to this test? Is not the young minister at God's altar, to whom is given eloquence and power over the souls of men, in danger of this temptation to theatric exhibitions — ostentatious display of self — this seeking for what is dramatic and striking, rather than what is for God's service and glory? Whoever is intrusted with power of any kind or in any degree is tempted to use it selfishly rather than divinely. To all such the Lord's temptation and resistance of it gives assurance of help if help be sought.

But finally came the last, the most insidious temptation, and its substance seemed to be this: "Why not use these miraculous gifts to make a worldly party? Why not flatter the national vanity of the Jews, excite their martial spirit, lead them to a course of successful revolt against their masters, and then of brilliant conquest, and seize upon all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them? To be sure, this will require making concession here and there to the evil passions of men, but when the supreme power is once gained all shall go right. Why this long, slow path of patience and self-denial? Why this conflict with the world? Why the cross and the grave? Why not the direct road of power, using the worldly forces first, and afterwards the spiritual?" This seems to be a free

version of all that is included in the proposition: "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of it; for that is delivered unto me and to whomsoever I will I give it. If, therefore, thou wilt worship me all shall be thine."

The indignant answer of Jesus shows with what living energy he repelled every thought of the least concession to evil, the least advantage to be gained by following or allowing the corrupt courses of this world. He would not flatter the rich and influential. He would not conceal offensive truth. He would seek the society of the poor and despised. He taught love of enemies in the face of a nation hating their enemies and longing for revenge. He taught forgiveness and prayer, while they were longing for battle and conquest. He blessed the meek, the sorrowful, the merciful, the persecuted for righteousness, instead of the powerful and successful. If he had been willing to have been such a king as the Scribes and Pharisees wanted they would have adored him and fought for him. But because his kingdom was not of this world they cried: "Not this man, but Barabbas!" It is said that after this temptation the Devil departed from him "for a season." But all through his life, in one form or another, that temptation must have been suggested to him.

When he told his Apostles that he was going up to Jerusalem to suffer and to die, Peter, it is said, rebuked him with earnestness: "That be far from thee, Lord; such things shall not happen to thee."

Jesus instantly replies, not to Peter, but to the Invisible Enemy who through Peter's affection and ambition is urging the worldly and self-seeking course upon him: "Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me. Thou savorest not the things that be of God but of man."

We are told that the temptation of Christ was so real that he suffered, being tempted. He knew that he must disappoint the expectations of all his friends who had set

their hearts on the temporal kingdom, that he was leading them on step by step to a season of unutterable darkness and sorrow. The cross was bitter to him, in prospect as in reality, but never for a moment did he allow himself to swerve from it. As the time drew near, he said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour? But, for this cause came I unto this hour; — Father, glorify thy name!"

Is not this lifelong temptation which Christ overcame one that meets us all every day and hour? To live an unworldly life; never to seek place or power or wealth by making the least sacrifice of conscience or principle; is it easy? is it common? Yet he who chose rather to die on the cross than to yield in the slightest degree his high spiritual mission can feel for our temptations and succor us even here.

The Apostle speaks of life as a *race* set before us, which we are to win by laying aside every impediment and looking steadfastly unto Jesus, who, "for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross." Our victories over self are to be gained not so much by self-reproaches and self-conflicts as by the enthusiasm of looking away from ourselves to Him who has overcome for us. Our Christ is not dead, but alive forevermore! A living presence, ever near to the soul that seeks salvation from sin. And to the struggling and the tempted he still says, "Look unto ME, and be ye saved."

X

OUR LORD'S BIBLE

THE life of Jesus, regarded from a mere human point of view, presents an astonishing problem. An obscure man in an obscure province has revolutionized the world.

Every letter and public document of the most cultured nations dates from his birth, as a new era. How was this man educated? We find he had no access to the Greek and Roman literature. Jesus was emphatically a man of one book. That book was the Hebrew Scriptures, which we call the Old Testament. The Old Testament was his Bible, and this single consideration must invest it with undying interest for us.

We read the Bible which our parents read. We see, perhaps, pencil-marks here and there, which show what they loved and what helped and comforted them in the days of their life-struggle, and the Bible is dearer to us on that account. Then, going backward along the bright pathway of the sainted and blessed who lived in former ages, the Bible becomes diviner to us for their sake. The Bible of the Martyrs, the Bible of the Waldenses, the Bible of Luther and Calvin, of our Pilgrim Fathers, has a double value.

I have in my possession a very ancient black-letter edition of the Bible printed in 1522, more than three hundred years ago. In this edition many of the Psalms have been read and re-read, till the paper is almost worn away. Some human heart, some suffering soul, has taken deep comfort here. If to have been the favorite, intimate friend of the greatest number of hearts be an ambition worthy of a poet, David has gained a loftier place than any poet who ever wrote. He has lived next to the heart of men, and women, and children, of all ages, in all climes, in all times and seasons, all over the earth. They have rejoiced and wept, prayed and struggled, lived and died, with David's words in their mouths. His heart has become the universal Christian heart, and will ever be, till earth's sorrows, and earth itself, are a vanished dream.

It is too much the fashion of this day to speak slightingly of the Old Testament. Apart from its grandeur, its

purity, its tenderness and majesty, the Old Testament has this peculiar interest to the Christian, — it was the Bible of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a man, Jesus had a human life to live, a human experience to undergo. For thirty silent years he was known among men only as a carpenter in Nazareth, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament were his daily companions. When he emerges into public life, we find him thoroughly versed in the Scriptures. Allusions to them are constant, through all his discourses; he continually refers to them as writings that reflect his own image. "Search the Scriptures," he says, "for they are they that testify of me."

The Psalms of David were to Jesus all and more than they can be to any other son of man.

In certain of them he saw himself and his future life, his trials, conflicts, sufferings, resurrection, and final triumph foreshadowed. He quoted them to confound his enemies. When they sought to puzzle him with perplexing questions he met them with others equally difficult, drawn from the Scriptures. He asks them: —

"What think ye of the Messiah? whose son is he? They say unto him, the Son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"

So, when they ask the question, "Which is the greatest commandment of all?" he answers by placing together two passages in the Old Testament, the one commanding supreme love to God and the other impartial love to man's neighbor. The greatest commandment of all nowhere stands in the Old Testament exactly as Jesus quotes it, the first part being found in Deuteronomy vi. 5, and the second in Leviticus xix. 18. This is a specimen of the exhaustive manner in which he studied and used the Scriptures.

Our Saviour quotes often also from the prophets. In his first public appearance in his native village he goes into the synagogue and reads from Isaiah. When they question and disbelieve, he answers them by pointed allusions to the stories of Naaman the Syrian and the widow of Sarepta. When the Sadducees raise the question of a future life, he replies by quoting from the Pentateuch that God calls himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living, for all are alive to him. He cites the history of Jonah as a symbol of his own death and resurrection; and at the last moment of his trial before the High Priest, when adjured to say whether he be the Christ or not, he replies in words that recall the sublime predictions in the Book of Daniel of the coming of Messiah to judgment. The prophet says: —

"I saw in my vision, and, behold, One like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days; and there was given unto him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, that shall not pass away or be destroyed."

When the High Priest of the Jews said to Jesus, "I adjure thee by the living God that thou tell us whether thou be Messiah or not," he answered, "I am; and hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven."

So much was the character of our Lord's teaching colored and impregnated by the writings of the Old Testament that it is impossible fully to comprehend Jesus without an intimate knowledge of them. To study the life of Christ without the Hebrew Scriptures is to study a flower without studying the plant from which it sprung, the root and leaves which nourished it. He continually spoke of himself as a Being destined to fulfill what had gone before.

"Think not," he said, "that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfill." He frequently spoke of himself as of the order and race of Jewish prophets; like them he performed symbolic acts which were visible prophecies, as when he knew his nation had finally rejected him he signified their doom by the awful sign of the blasted fig-tree. Through all the last days of Jesus, as his death approaches, we find continual references to the Old Testament prophecies, and quotations from them.

And after his resurrection, when he appears to his disciples, he "opens to them the Scriptures;" that talk on the way to Emmaus was an explanation of the prophecies, by our Lord himself. Would that it had been recorded! Would not our hearts too have "burned within us!"

Now, a book that was in life and in death so dear to our Lord, a book which he interpreted as from first to last a preparation for and prophecy of himself, cannot but be full of interest to us Christians. When we read the Old Testament Scriptures we go along a track that we know Jesus and his mother must often have trod together. The great resemblance in style between the Song of Mary and the Psalms of David is one of the few indications given in Holy Writ of the veiled and holy mystery of his mother's life. She was a poetess, a prophetess, one whose mind was capable of the highest ecstasy of inspiration. Let us read the Psalms again, with the thought in our mind that they were the comforters, the counselors of Jesus and Mary. What was so much to them cannot be indifferent to us.

Nor did the disciples and Apostles in the glow of the unfolding dispensation cease to reverence and value those writings so closely studied by their Lord. They did not speak of them as a worn-out thing, that had "had its day," but they alluded to them with the affectionate ven-

eration due to divine oracles. "The prophecy came not of old times by the will of man, but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." St. Paul congratulates Timothy that "from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation," and adds: "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

Even while the New Testament was being formed, its writers gave this complete testimony to the Old, as being able to make men "wise unto salvation," and to complete a man's spiritual education. This book, then, so dear to Christ and his Apostles, is something that should be dear to all Christians. Its study will enrich the soul. It is wonderful, mysterious, unique — there is no sacred book like it in the world; and in reading it we come nearer to Him who was foretold by it, and who when he came upon the earth found in it nourishment for his soul, instruction and spiritual refreshment by the wayside, comfort even in the extreme agonies of a dreadful death. However dear to us may be the story of his life in the Gospels and his teachings through his Apostles and their Epistles, let us in following his steps forget not "the Scriptures" which he bade us search, but diligently read and love the Bible of our Lord.

XI

CHRIST'S FIRST SERMON

THE first public sermon of the long-desired Messiah — his first declaration of his mission and message to the world — what was it?

It was delivered in his own city of Nazareth, where he had been brought up; it was on the Sabbath day; it was in the synagogue where he had always worshiped; and it was in manner and form exactly in accordance with the customs of his national religion.

It had always been customary among the Jews to call upon any member of the synagogue to read a passage from the book of the prophets; and the young man Jesus, concerning whom certain rumors had vaguely gone forth, was on the day in question called to take his part in the service. It was a holy and solemn moment, when the long silence of years was to be broken. Jesus was surrounded by faces familiar from infancy. His mother, his brothers, his sisters, were all there; every eye was fixed upon him. The historian says: —

"And there was delivered unto him the book (or roll) of the prophet Isaiah, and when he had unrolled the book he found the place where it is written (Isaiah lxi.): —

The spirit of the Lord is upon me.
He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor;
He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted;
To preach deliverance to the captives;
The recovering of sight to the blind;
To set at liberty them that are bruised;
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

We may imagine the sweetness, the tenderness, the enthusiasm with which this beautiful announcement of his mission was uttered; and when, closing the book, he looked round on the faces of his townsmen and acquaintances, and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears," — it was an appeal of Heavenly love yearning to heal and to save those nearest and longest known.

It would seem that the sweet voice, the graceful manner, at first charmed the rough audience; there was a thrilling, vibrating power, that struck upon every heart. But those hearts were cold and hard. A Saviour from sin, a Com-

forter of sorrow, was not what they were looking for in their Messiah. They felt themselves good enough spiritually, in their observance of the forms of their law and ritual; they were stupidly content with themselves and wanted no comforter. What they did want was a brilliant military leader. They wanted a miracle-working, supernatural Lord and Commander that should revenge their national wrongs, conquer the Romans, and set the Jewish people at the head of the world. Having heard of the miracles of Christ in Cana and Capernaum, they had thought that perhaps he might prove this Leader, and if so, what a glory for Nazareth! But they were in a critical, exacting mood; they were in their hearts calling for some brilliant and striking performance that should illuminate and draw attention to their town. Although the congregation were at first impressed and charmed with the gracious words and manner of the speaker, the hard, vulgar spirit of envy and carping criticism soon overshadowed their faces.

"Who is this Jesus — is he not the carpenter? What sign does he show? Let him work some miracles forthwith, and we will see if we will believe."

It was this disposition which our Lord felt in the atmosphere around him; the language of souls uttered itself to him unspoken. He answered as he so often did to the feeling he saw in the hearts rather than the words of those around him. He said, "Ye will say to me, Physician, heal thyself. Do here in thy native place the marvels we have heard of in Capernaum. I tell you a truth; no prophet is accepted in his own country. There were many widows in Israel in the time of the prophet Elijah, but he was sent only to a widow of Sarepta, a city of Sidon. There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, yet none of them was healed but Naaman the Syrian." It would seem as if our Lord was preparing to show them that he had a mission of love and mercy that could not be

bounded by one village, or even by the chosen race of Israel, but was for the world.

But the moment he spoke of favors and blessings given to the Gentiles the fierce national spirit flamed up; the speech was cut short by a tumultuous uprising of the whole synagogue. They laid violent hands on Jesus and hurried him to the brow of the precipice on which their city was built, to cast him down headlong. But before the murder was consummated the calm majesty of Jesus had awed his persecutors. Their slackened hands dropped; they looked one on another irresolute: and he, passing silently through the midst of them, went his way. He had offered himself to them as their Saviour from sin and from sorrow in the very fullness of his heart. Heavenly tenderness and sweetness had stretched out its arms to embrace them, and been repulsed by sneering coldness and hard, worldly unbelief.

Nazareth did not want Him; and he left it. It was the first of those many rejections which He at last summed up when he said, "How often would I have gathered thy children, and ye would not."

But, though he thus came to his own and his own received him not, yet the lovely and gracious proclamation which he made then and there still stands unfading and beautiful as a rainbow of hope over this dark earth. The one Being sent into the world to represent the Invisible Father, and to show us the hidden heart and purposes of God in this mysterious life of ours, there declared that his mission was one of pity, of help, of consolation; that the poor, the bruised, the desolate, the prisoner, might forever find a Friend in him.

There are times when the miseries and sorrows of the suffering race of man, the groaning and travailing of this mysterious life of ours, oppress us, and our faith in God's love grows faint,

Then let us turn our thoughts to this divine Personality, Jesus, the anointed Son of God, and hear him saying now, as he said at Nazareth: —

"The spirit of the Lord is upon ME.
He hath sent me to preach good tidings to the poor;
He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted,
To preach deliverance to the captives,
The recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised!"

It is said of him in the prophets: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth. The isles shall wait for his law. Our Redeemer is mighty; the Lord of Hosts is his name — our Saviour, the Holy One of Israel!"

XII

THE FRIENDSHIPS OF JESUS

In turning our thoughts toward various scenes of our Lord's life, we are peculiarly affected with the human warmth and tenderness of his personal friendships. The little association of his own peculiar friends makes a picture that we need to study to understand him.

St. John touchingly says: "Now when the time was come that Jesus should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end." When we think that all that we know of our Lord comes through these friends of his — the witnesses and recorders of his life and death — we shall feel more than ever what he has made them to us. Without them we should have had no Jesus.

Our Lord, with all that he is to us, is represented to us through the loving hearts and affectionate records of these his chosen ones. It is amazing to think of, that our Lord

never left to his church one line written by his own hand, and that all his words come to us transfused through the memories of his friends. How much to us, then, were these friendships of Jesus — how dear to us, for all eternity, these friends!

We are told that immediately after the resurrection there was an associated church of one hundred and twenty, who are characterized by Peter as "men that have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us."

The account of how these friends were gathered to him becomes deeply interesting. St. John relates how, one day, John the Baptist saw Jesus walking by the Jordan in silent contemplation, and pointed him out to his disciples: "Behold the Lamb of God." And the two disciples heard him speak and followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and said, "What seek ye?" They said, "Master, where dwellest thou?" He answered, "Come and see." They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day. We learn from this that some of the disciples were those whose spiritual nature had been awakened by John the Baptist, and who, under his teaching, were devoting themselves to a religious life. We see the power of personal attraction possessed by our Lord, which drew these simple, honest natures to himself. One of these men was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, and he immediately carried the glad tidings to his brother, "We have found the Messiah;" and he brought him to Jesus. Thus, by a sort of divine attraction, one brother and friend bringing another, the little band increased. Some were more distinctly called by the Master. Matthew, the tax-gatherer, sitting in his place of business, heard the words, "Follow me," and immediately rose up, and left all and followed him. James and John forsook their nets, in the midst of their day's labor, to follow him. In time, a little

band of twelve left all worldly callings and home ties, to form a traveling mission family of which Jesus was the head and father. Others, both men and women, at times traveled with them and assisted their labors; but these twelve were the central figures.

These twelve men Jesus took to nurture and educate as the expounders of the Christian religion and the organizers of the church. St. John, in poetic vision, sees the church as a golden city descending from God out of heaven, having twelve foundations, and in them the names of these twelve Apostles of the Lamb. This plan of choosing honest, simple-hearted, devout men, and revealing himself to the world through their human nature and divinely educated conceptions, had in it something peculiar and original.

When we look at the selection made by Christ of these *own* ones, we see something widely different from all the usual methods of earthly wisdom. They were neither the most cultured nor the most influential of their times. The majority of them appear to have been plain workingmen, from the same humble class in which our Lord was born. But the Judæan peasant, under the system of religious training and teaching given by Moses, was no stolid or vulgar character. He inherited lofty and inspiring traditions, a ritual stimulating to the spiritual and poetic nature, a system of ethical morality and of tenderness to humanity in advance of the whole ancient world. A good Jew was frequently a man of spiritualized and elevated devotion. Supreme love to God and habitual love and charity to man were the essentials of his religious ideal. The whole system of divine training and discipline to which the Jewish race had been subjected for hundreds of years had prepared a higher moral average to be chosen from than could have been found in any other nation.

When Jesus began to preach, it was the best and purest

men that most deeply sympathized and were most attracted, and from them he chose his intimate circle of followers — to train them as the future Apostles of his religion.

The new dispensation that Jesus came to introduce was something as yet uncomprehended on earth. It was a heavenly ideal, and these men — simple, pure-hearted, and devout as they were — had no more conception of it than a deaf person has of music. It was a new manner of life, a new style of manhood, that was to constitute this kingdom of Heaven. It was no outward organization — no earthly glory. Man was to learn to live, not by force, not by ambition, not by pleasure, but by LOVE. Man was to become perfect in love as God is, so that loving and serving and suffering for others should become a fashion and habit in this world, where ruling and domineering and making others suffer had been the law. And Jesus took into his family twelve men to prepare them to be the Apostles of this idea. His mode was more that of a mother than a father. He strove to infuse Himself into them by an embracing, tender, brooding love; ardent, self-forgetful, delicate, refined. As we read the New Testament narrative of the walks and talks of Jesus with these chosen ones, their restings by the wayside, their family conversations at evening, when he sat with some little child on his knee, when he listened to their sayings, reproved their failings, settled their difficulties with one another, we can see no image by which to represent the Master but one of those loving, saintly mothers, who, in leading along their little flock, follow nearest in the footsteps of Jesus.

Jesus trusted more to personal love, in forming his church, than to any other force. The power of love in developing the intellect and exciting the faculties is marked, even on the inferior animals. The dog is changed by tender treatment and affectionate care; he becomes half human, and seems to struggle to rise out of the brute

nature toward a beloved master. Rude human natures are correspondingly changed, and he who has great power of loving and exciting love may almost create anew whom he will.

Jesus, that guest from brighter worlds, brought to this earth the nobler ideas of love, the tenderness, the truth, the magnanimity, that are infinite in the All-Loving. What of God could be expressed and understood by man He was, and St. John says of his ethereal gentleness and sweetness of nature: "The light shined in the darkness and the darkness comprehended it not."

The varieties of natural character in this family of Jesus were such as to give most of the usual differences of human beings. The Master's object was to unite them to each other by such a love that they should move by a single impulse, as one human being, and that what was lacking in one might be made up by what was abundant in another. As He expressed it in his last prayer: "That they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me."

How diverse were the elements! Simon Peter, self-confident, enthusiastic, prompt to speak and to decide. Thomas, slow and easily disheartened; always deficient in hope, and inclined to look upon the dark side, yet constant unto death in his affections. James and John, young men of the better class, belonging to a rich family, on terms of intimate acquaintance with the High Priest. Of these brothers, John is the idealist and the poet of the little band, but far from being the weak and effeminate character painters and poets have generally conceived. James and John were surnamed Boanerges — "sons of thunder." They were the ones who wanted to call down fire on the village that refused to receive their Lord. It was they who joined in the petition preferred by their mother for

the seat of honor in the future kingdom. Young, ardent, impetuous, full of fire and of that susceptibility to ambition which belongs to high-strung and vivid organizations, their ardor was like a flame, that might scorch and burn as well as vivify. Then there was Matthew, the prosaic, the exact matter-of-fact man, whose call it was to write what critics have called the *bodily gospel* of our Lord's life, as it was that of John to present the inner heart of Jesus. These few salient instances show the strong and marked diversities of temperament and character which Jesus proposed to unite into one whole, by an intense personal love which should melt down all angles, and soften asperities, and weld and blend the most discordant elements. It is the more remarkable that he undertook this task with men in mature life, and who had already been settled in several callings, and felt the strain of all those causes which excite the individual self-love of man.

In guiding all these, we can but admire the perfect tolerance of the Master toward the wants of each varying nature. Tolerance for individual character is about the last Christian grace that comes to flower in family or church. Much of the raspings, and gratings, and complaints in family and church are from the habit of expecting and exacting that people should be what they never were made to be. Our Lord did not reprove Thomas for being a despondent doubter, beset by caution even when he most longed to believe. He graciously granted the extremest test which his hopeless nature required — he suffered him to put his finger in the print of the nails and to examine the wounded side; and there is but a tender shadow of a reproof in what he said — "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." In our day there are many disciples of Thomas, loving doubters, who would give their hearts' blood to fully believe in this risen

Jesus; they would willingly put their hands in the print of the nails; and for them the Master has a spiritual presence and a convincing nearness, if they will but seek it. So, again, we notice the tender indulgence with which the self-confident Peter is listened to as he always interposes his opinion. We think we can see the Master listening with a grave smile, as a mother to her eldest and most self-confident boy. Sometimes he warmly commends, and sometimes he bears down on him with a sharpness of rebuke which would have annihilated a softer nature. When Peter officiously counsels worldly expediency, and the avoidance of the sufferings for which Jesus came, the reply is sharp as lightning: "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me; for thou savorest not the things of God, but those that be of man." Yet we can see that the Master knows his man, and knows just how hard to strike. That eager, combative, self-confident nature not only can bear sharp treatment, but must have it at times, or never come to anything. We see Peter's self-asserting nature spring up after it, cheerful as ever. He yields to the reproof; but he is Peter still, prompt with his opinion at the next turn of affairs, and the Master would not for the world have him anybody else but Peter.

We see also that it was a manner of the Master to deal with the conscience of his children, and rebuke their faults without exposing them to the censure of others. When he saw that the sin of covetousness was growing upon Judas, leading to dishonesty, he combated it by the most searching and stringent teaching. "Beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the things that he possesseth;" this and other passages, which will be more fully considered in another chapter, would seem to have been all warnings to Judas, if he would but have listened.

So, too, his tenderness for John, whom tradition reports to have been the youngest of the disciples, marked a deli-

cate sense of character. To lean on his bosom was not sought by Matthew or Thomas, though both loved him supremely; it fell to the lot of John, — as in a family flock, where one, the youngest and tenderest, is always found silently near the mother; the others smile to see him always there, and think it well. There are in St. John's narrative touches of that silent accord between him and Jesus, that comprehension without words, which comes between natures strung alike to sympathy. To him Jesus commended his mother, as the nearest earthly substitute for himself. Yet, after all, when for this one so dear, so accordant with his own personal feelings, a request was made for station and honor in the heavenly kingdom, he promptly refused. His personal affection for his friends was to have no undue influence in that realm of things which belonged to the purely divine disposal. "The kingdom of heaven is *within* you," he taught; and John's place in the spiritual domain must depend upon John's own spirit.

There is one trait in the character of these chosen disciples of Christ which is worth a special thought. They were not, as we have seen, in any sense remarkable men intellectually, but they had one preparation for the work for which Jesus chose them which has not been a common one, either then or since. They were wholly consecrated to God. It is not often we meet with men capable of an entire self-surrender; these men were. They were so entirely devoted to God that, when Jesus called on them to give up their worldly callings and forsake all they had, to follow him, they obeyed without a question or a hesitating moment. How many men should we find in the church now that would do the same? Christ proposed this test to one young ruler, — amiable, reverent, moral, and religious, — and he "went away sad." He could do a great deal for God, but he could not *give up* ALL. Christ's

disciples gave ALL to him, and therefore he gave ALL to them. Therefore he gave them to share his throne and his glory. The Apocalyptic vision showed graven on the foundations of the golden city the names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb, those true-hearted men who were not only to be the founders of his church on earth, but were, while he was yet in the flesh, his daily companions, his friends, "his own."

XIII

CHRIST'S UNWORLDLY METHODS

WE are struck, in the history of our Lord, with the unworldliness of his manner of living his daily life and fulfilling his great commission. It is emphatically true, in the history of Jesus, that his ways are not as our ways, and his thoughts as our thoughts. He did not choose the disciples of his first ministry as worldly wisdom would have chosen them. Though men of good and honest hearts, they were neither the most cultured nor the most influential of his nation. We should have said that men of the standing of Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus were preferable, other things being equal, to Peter the fisherman or Matthew the tax-gatherer; but Jesus thought otherwise.

And, furthermore, he sometimes selected those apparently most unlikely to further his ends. Thus, when he had a mission of mercy in view for Samaria, he called to the work a woman; not such as we should suppose a divine teacher would choose, — not a preëminently intellectual or a very good woman, — but, on the contrary, one of a careless life, and loose morals, and little culture. The history of this person, of the way in which he sought her acquaintance, arrested her attention, gained access to her heart, and made of her a missionary to draw the atten-

tion of her people to him, is wonderfully given by St. John. We have the image of a woman — such as many are, social, good-humored, talkative, and utterly without any high moral sense — approaching the well, where she sees this weary Jew reclining to rest himself. He introduces himself to her acquaintance by asking a favor, — the readiest way to open the heart of a woman of that class. She is evidently surprised that he will speak to her, being a Jew, and she a daughter of a despised and hated race. "How is it," she says, "that thou, a Jew, askest drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" Jesus now answers her in that symbolic and poetic strain which was familiar with him: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who this is that asketh drink of thee, thou wouldst ask of him, and he would give thee living water." The woman sees in this only the occasion for a lively rejoinder: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; from whence then hast thou that living water?" With that same mysterious air, as if speaking unconsciously from out some higher sphere, he answers, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again; but whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give shall never thirst. The water that I shall give shall be a well in him springing up to everlasting life."

Impressed strangely by the words of the stranger, she answers confusedly, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw." There is a feeble attempt at a jest struggling with the awe which is growing upon her. Jesus now touches the vital spot in her life. "Go, call thy husband and come hither." She said, "I have no husband." He answers, "Well hast thou said I have no husband; thou hast had five husbands, and he thou now hast is not thy husband; in that saidst thou truly."

The stern, grave chastity of the Jew, his reverence for

marriage, strike coldly on the light-minded woman accustomed to the easy tolerance of a low state of society. She is abashed, and hastily seeks to change the subject: "Sir, I see thou art a prophet;" and then she introduces the controverted point of the two liturgies and temples of Samaria and Jerusalem, — not the first nor the last was she of those who seek relief from conscience by discussing doctrinal dogmas. Then, to our astonishment, Jesus proceeds to declare to this woman of light mind and loose morality the sublime doctrines of spiritual worship, to predict the new era which is dawning on the world: "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh when neither in this mountain nor yet in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. The hour cometh and now is when the true worshipper shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Then, in a sort of confused awe at his earnestness, the woman said, "I know that Messiah shall come, and when he is come he will tell us all things." Jesus saith unto her, "I that speak unto thee am he."

At this moment the disciples returned. With their national prejudices, it was very astonishing, as they drew nigh, to see that their Master was in close and earnest conversation with a Samaritan woman. Nevertheless, when the higher and godlike in Jesus was fully enkindled, the light and fire were such as to awe them. They saw that he was in an exalted mood, which they dared not question. All the infinite love of the Saviour, the shepherd of souls, was awaking within him; the soul whom he has inspired with a new and holy calling is leaving him on a mission that is to bring crowds to his love. The disciples pray him to eat, but he is no longer hungry, no longer thirsty, no longer weary; he exults in the gifts that he is ready to give, and the hearts that are opening to receive.

The disciples pray him, "Master, eat." He said, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." They question in an undertone, "Hath any one brought him aught to eat?" He answers, "My meat and my drink is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." Then, pointing towards the city, he speaks impassioned words of a harvest which is at hand; and they wonder.

But meanwhile the woman, with the eagerness and bright, social readiness which characterize her, is calling to her townsmen, "Come, see a man that told me all that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?"

What followed on this? A crowd press out to see the wonder. Jesus is invited as an honored guest; he spends two days in the city, and gathers a band of disciples.

After the resurrection of Jesus, we find further fruits of the harvest sown by a chance interview of Jesus with this woman. In the eighth of Acts we read of the ingathering of a church in a city of Samaria, where it is said that "the people, with one accord, gave heed to the things spoken by Philip, and there was great joy in that city."

One thing in this story impresses us strongly, — the power which Jesus had to touch the divinest capabilities in the unlikeliest subjects. He struck at once and directly for what was highest and noblest in souls where it lay most hidden. As physician of souls he appealed directly to the vital moral force, and it acted under his touch. He saw the higher nature in this woman, and as one might draw a magnet over a heap of rubbish and bring out pure metal, so he from this careless, light-minded, good-natured, unprincipled creature brought out the suppressed and hidden yearning for a better and higher life. She had no prejudices to keep, no station to preserve; she was even to her own low moral sense consciously a sinner, and she was ready at the kind and powerful appeal to leave all and follow him.

We have no further history of her. She is living now somewhere; but wherever she may be, we may be quite sure she never has forgotten the conversation at the well in Samaria, and the man who "told her all that ever she did."

XIV

CHRIST AND THE FALLEN WOMAN

The absolute divinity of Jesus, the height at which he stood above all men, is nowhere so shown as in what he dared and did for woman, and the godlike consciousness of authority with which he did it. It was at a critical period in his ministry, when all eyes were fixed on him in keen inquiry, when many of the respectable classes were yet trembling in the balance whether to accept his claims or not, that Jesus in the calmest and most majestic manner took the ground that the sins of a fallen woman were like any other sins, and that repentant love entitled to equal forgiveness. The story so wonderful can be told only in the words of the sacred narrative: —

"And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meat. And behold a woman in that city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him, weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is, for she is a sinner. And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. He said unto him, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor had two debtors; the one owed him five hundred pence and the other fifty, and when they had nothing to

pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which will love him most. Simon answered and said, I suppose he to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house and thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore, I say unto you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

Nothing can be added to the pathos and solemn dignity of this story, in which our Lord assumed with tranquil majesty the rights to supreme love possessed by the Creator, and his sovereign power to forgive sins and dispense favors. The repentant Magdalene became henceforth one of the characteristic figures in the history of the Christian Church. Mary Magdalene became eventually a prominent character in the mythic legends of the mediæval mythology. A long history of missionary labors and enthusiastic preaching of the gospel in distant regions of the earth is ascribed to her. Churches arose that bore her name, hymns were addressed to her. Even the reforming Savonarola addresses one of his spiritual canticles to St. Mary Magdalene. The various pictures of her which occur in every part of Europe are a proof of the interest which these legends inspired. The most of them are wild and poetic, and exhibit a striking contrast to the concise brevity and simplicity of the New Testament story.

The mythic legends make up a romance in which Mary the sister of Martha and Mary Magdalene the sinner are oddly considered as the same person. It is sufficient to

read the chapter in St. John which gives an account of the raising of Lazarus, to perceive that such a confusion is absurd. Mary and Martha there appear as belonging to a family in good standing to which many flocked with expressions of condolence and respect in time of affliction. And afterwards, in that grateful feast made for the restoration of their brother, we read that so many flocked to the house that the jealousy of the chief priests was excited. All these incidents, representing a family of respectability, are entirely inconsistent with any such supposition. But while we repudiate this extravagance of the tradition, there does seem ground for identifying the Mary Magdalene who was one of the most devoted followers of our Lord with the forgiven sinner of this narrative. We read of a company of women who followed Jesus and ministered to him. In the eighth chapter of Luke he is said to be accompanied by "certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities," among whom is mentioned "Mary called Magdalene," as having been a victim of demoniacal possession. Some women of rank and fortune also are mentioned as members of the same company: "Joanna the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who ministered to him of their substance." A modern commentator thinks it improbable that Mary Magdalene could be identified with the "sinner" spoken of by St. Luke, because women of standing like Joanna and Susanna would not have received one of her class to their company. We ask why not? If Jesus had received her, had forgiven and saved her; if *he* acknowledged previously her grateful ministrations, — is it likely that they would reject her? It was the very peculiarity and glory of the new kingdom that it had a better future for sinners, and for sinful woman as well as sinful man. Jesus did not hesitate to say to the proud and prejudiced religious aristocracy of his day, "The publicans and harlots go into

the kingdom of heaven before you." We cannot doubt that the loving Christian women who ministered to Jesus received this penitent sister as a soul absolved and purified by the sovereign word of their Lord, and henceforth there was for her a full scope for that ardent, self-devoting power of her nature which had been her ruin, and was now to become her salvation.

Some commentators seem to think that the dreadful demoniacal possession which was spoken of in Mary Magdalene proves her not to have been identical with the woman of St. Luke. But, on the contrary, it would seem exactly to account for actions of a strange and unaccountable wickedness, for a notoriety in crime that went far to lead the Pharisees to feel that her very touch was pollution. The story is symbolic of what is too often seen in the fall of woman. A noble and beautiful nature wrecked through inconsiderate prodigality of love, deceived, betrayed, ruined, often drifts like a shipwrecked bark into the power of evil spirits. Rage, despair, revenge, cruelty, take possession of the crushed ruin that should have been the home of the sweetest affections. We are not told when or where the healing word was spoken that drove the cruel fiends from Mary's soul. Perhaps before she entered the halls of the Pharisee, while listening to the preaching of Jesus, the madness and despair had left her. We can believe that in his higher moods virtue went from him, and there was around him a holy and cleansing atmosphere from which all evil fled away, — a serene and healing purity which calmed the throbbing fever of passion and gave the soul once more the image of its better self.

We see in the manner in which Mary found her way to the feet of Jesus the directness and vehemence, the uncalculating self-sacrifice and self-abandon, of one of those natures which, when they move, move with a rush of undivided impulse; which, when they love, trust all, believe

all, and are ready to sacrifice all. As once she had lost herself in this self-abandonment, so now at the feet of her God she gains all by the same power of self-surrender.

We do not meet Mary Magdalene again till we find her at the foot of the cross, sharing the last anguish of our Lord and his mother. We find her watching the sepulchre, preparing sweet spices for embalming. In the dim gray of the resurrection morning she is there again, only to find the sepulchre open and the beloved form gone. Everything in this last scene is in consistency with the idea of the passionate self-devotion of a nature whose sole life is in its love. The disciples, when they found not the body, went away; but Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre. The angel said to her, "Woman, why weepest thou? She answered, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She then turns and sees through her tears dimly the form of a man standing there. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will go and take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary! She turned herself and said unto him, Rabboni, — Master!"

In all this we see the characteristic devotion and energy of her who loved much because she was forgiven much. It was the peculiarity of Jesus that he saw the precious capability of every nature, even in the very dust of defilement. The power of devoted love is the crown jewel of the soul, and Jesus had the eye to see where it lay trampled in the mire, and the strong hand to bring it forth purified and brightened. It is the deepest malignity of Satan to degrade and ruin souls through love. It is the glory of Christ, through love, to redeem and restore.

In the history of Christ as a teacher, it is remarkable that, while he was an object of enthusiastic devotion to so many women, while a band of them followed his preaching and ministered to his wants and those of his disciples, yet there was about him something so entirely unworldly, so sacredly high and pure, that even the very suggestion of scandal in this regard is not to be found in the bitterest vituperations of his enemies of the first two centuries.

If we compare Jesus with Socrates, the moral teacher most frequently spoken of as approaching him, we shall see a wonderful contrast. Socrates associated with courtesans, without passion and without reproof, in a spirit of half-sarcastic, philosophic tolerance. No quickening of the soul of woman, no call to a higher life, came from him. Jesus is stern and grave in his teachings of personal purity, severe in his requirements. He was as intolerant to sin as he was merciful to penitence. He did not extenuate the sins he forgave. He declared the sins of Mary to be *many* in the same breath that he pronounced her pardon. He said to the adulterous woman whom he protected, "Go, sin no more." The penitents who joined the company of his disciples were so raised above their former selves, that, instead of being the shame, they were the glory of the new kingdom. St. Paul says to the first Christians, speaking of the adulterous and impure, "Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God."

The tradition of the church that Mary Magdalene was an enthusiastic preacher of Jesus seems in keeping with all we know of the strength and fervor of her character. Such love must find expression, and we are told that when the first persecution scattered the little church at Jerusalem, "they that were scattered went everywhere, preaching the word." Some of the most effective preaching of Christ

is that of those who testify in their own person of a great salvation. "He can save to the uttermost, for he has saved ME," is a testimony that often goes more straight to the heart than all the arguments of learning. Christianity had this peculiarity over all other systems, that it not only forgave the past, but made of its bitter experiences a healing medicine; so that those who had sinned deepest might have therefrom a greater redeeming power. "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren," was the watchword of the penitent.

The wonderful mind of Goethe has seized upon and embodied this peculiarity of Christianity in his great poem of "Faust." The first part shows the Devil making of the sweetest and noblest affection of the confiding Margaret a cruel poison to corrupt both body and soul. We see her driven to crime, remorse, shame, despair, all human forms and forces of society united to condemn her, when with a last cry she stretches her poor hands to heaven and says, "Judgment of God, I commend myself to you;" and then falls a voice from heaven, "She is judged; she is saved."

In the second part we see the world-worn, weary Faust passing through the classic mythology, vainly seeking rest and finding none; he seeks rest in a life of benevolence to man, but fiends of darkness conflict with his best aspirations, and dog his steps through life, and in his dying hour gather round to seize his soul and carry it to perdition. But around him is a shining band. Mary the mother of Jesus with a company of purified penitents encircle him, and his soul passes, in infantine weakness, to the guardian arms of Margaret, — once a lost and ruined woman, now a strong and pitiful angel, — who, like a tender mother, leads the new-born soul to look upon the glories of heaven, while angel voices sing to the victory of good over evil: —

"All that is transient
Is but a parable;
The unattainable
Here is made real.
The indescribable
Here is accomplished;
The eternal womanly
Draws us upward and onward."

XV

THE REVEALER OF GOD'S SYMPATHY

THE interest inspired by the wonderful character of Jesus rests especially on those incidents which are most purely human, his private, personal friendships, his keen sympathy with the suffering and the afflicted. Among these incidents the story and characters of the two sisters, Martha and Mary, have been set before us with a fine individualism of dramatic representation that seems to make them real to us, even at this distance of time.

The two sisters of Bethany have had for ages a name and a living power in the church. Thousands of hearts have throbbed with theirs; thousands have wept sympathetic tears in their sorrows and rejoiced in their joy. By a few simple touches in the narrative they are so delicately and justly discriminated that they stand for the representatives of two distinct classes. Some of the ancient Christian writers considered them as types of the active and the contemplative aspects of religion. Martha is viewed as the secular Christian, serving God in and through the channels of worldly business, and Mary as the more peculiarly religious person, devoted to a life of holy meditation and the researches of heavenly truth. The two were equally the friends of Jesus. Apparently, the two sisters with one brother were an orphan family, united by the

strongest mutual affection, and affording a circle peculiarly congenial to the Master.

They inhabited a rural home just outside of Jerusalem; and it seems that here, after the labors of a day spent in teaching in the city, our Lord found at evening a home-like retreat where he could enjoy perfect quiet and perfect love. It would seem, from many touches in the Gospel narrative, as if Jesus, amid the labors and applauses and successes of a public life, yearned for privacy and domesticity, — for that home love which he persistently renounced to give himself wholly to mankind. There is a shade of pathos in his answer to one who proposed to be his disciple and dwell with him: "Foxes have holes; the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." This little orphan circle, with their quiet home, were thus especially dear to him, and it appears that this was his refuge during that last week of his life, when he knew that every day was bringing him nearer to the final anguish.

It is wonderful how sharply and truly, in a narrative so brief, the characters of Martha and Mary are individualized. Martha, in her Judæan dress and surroundings, is, after all, exactly such a good woman as is often seen in our modern life, — a woman primarily endowed with the faculties necessary for getting on in the world, yet sincerely religious. She is energetic, businesslike, matter-of-fact, strictly orthodox, and always ready for every emergency. She lives in the present life strongly and intensely, and her religion exhibits itself through regular forms and agencies. She believes in the future life orthodoxly, and is always prompt to confess its superior importance as a matter of doctrine, though prone to make material things the first in practice. Many such women there are in the high places of the Christian Church, and much good they do. They manage fairs, they dress churches, they get up

religious festivals, their names are on committees, they are known at celebrations. They rule their own homes with activity and diligence, and they are justly honored by all who know them. Now, nothing is more remarkable in the history of Jesus than the catholicity of his appreciation of character. He never found fault with natural organization, or expected all people to be of one pattern. He did not break with Thomas for being naturally a cautious doubter, or Peter for being a precipitate believer; and it is specially recorded in the history of this family that Jesus loved Martha. He understood her, he appreciated her worth, and he loved her.

In Mary we see the type of those deeper and more sensitive natures who ever aspire above and beyond the material and temporal to the eternal and divine; souls that are seeking and inquiring with a restlessness that no earthly thing can satisfy, who can find no peace until they find it in union with God.

In St. Luke we have a record of the manner in which the first acquaintance with this family was formed. This historian says: "A woman named Martha received him at her house." Evidently the decisive and salient power of her nature caused her to be regarded as mistress of the family. There was a grown-up brother in the family; but this house is not called the house of Lazarus, but the house of Martha — a form of speaking the more remarkable from the great superiority or leadership which ancient customs awarded to the male sex. But Martha was one of those natural leaders whom everybody instinctively thinks of as the head of any house they may happen to belong to. Her tone toward Mary is authoritative. The Mary-nature is a nature apt to appear to disadvantage in physical things. It is often puzzled, and unskilled, and unready in the details and emergencies of a life like ours, which so little meets its deepest feelings and most importunate wants.

It acquires skill in earthly things only as a matter of discipline and conscience, but is always yearning above them to something higher and divine. A delicacy of moral nature suggests to such a person a thousand scruples of conscientious inquiry in every turn of life, which embarrass directness of action. To the Martha-nature, practical, direct, and prosaic, all these doubts, scruples, hesitations, and unreadinesses appear only as pitiable weaknesses.

Again, Martha's nature attaches a vast importance to many things which, in the view of Mary, are so fleeting and perishable, and have so little to do with the deeper immortal wants of the soul, that it is difficult for her even to remember and keep them in sight. The requirements of etiquette, the changes and details of fashion, the thousand particulars which pertain to keeping up a certain footing in society and a certain position in the world — all these Martha has at her fingers' ends. They are the breath of her nostrils, while Mary is always forgetting, overlooking, and transgressing them. Many a Mary has escaped into a convent, or joined a sisterhood, or worn the plain dress of the Quaker in order that she might escape from the exaction of the Marthas of her day, "careful [or, more literally, *full of care*] and troubled about many things."

It appears that in her way Martha was a religious woman, a sincere member of the Jewish Church, and an intense believer. The preaching of Christ was the great religious phenomenon of the times, and Martha, Mary, and Lazarus joined the crowd who witnessed his miracles and listened to his words. Both women accepted his message and believed his Messiahship — Martha, from the witness of his splendid miracles; Mary, from the deep accord of her heart with the wonderful words he had uttered. To Martha he was the King that should reign in splendor at Jerusalem, and raise their nation to an

untold height of glory; to Mary he was the answer to the eternal question — the Way, the Truth, the Life, for which she had been always longing.

Among many who urge and press hospitality, Martha's invitation prevails. A proud home is that, when Jesus follows her — her prize, her captive. The woman in our day who has captured in her net of hospitalities the orator, the poet, the warrior — the star of all eyes, the central point of all curiosity, desire, and regard — can best appreciate Martha's joy. She will make an entertainment that will do credit to the occasion. She revolves prodigies of hospitality. She invites guests to whom her Acquisition shall be duly exhibited, and all is hurry, bustle, and commotion. But Mary follows him, silent, with a fluttering heart. His teaching has aroused the divine longing, the immortal pain, to a throbbing intensity; a sweet presentiment fills her soul, that she is near One through whom the way into the Holiest is open, and now is the hour. She neither hears nor sees the bustle of preparation; but apart, where the Master has seated himself, she sits down at his feet, and her eyes, more than her voice, address to him that question and that prayer which are the question and the one great reality of all this fleeting, mortal life.

The question is answered; the prayer is granted. At his feet she becomes spiritually clairvoyant. The way to God becomes clear and open. Her soul springs toward the light; is embraced by the peace of God that passeth understanding. It is a soul-crisis, and the Master sees that in that hour his breath has unfolded into blossom buds that had been struggling in darkness. Mary has received in her bosom the "white stone with the new name, which no man knoweth save him that receiveth it," and of which Jesus only is the giver. As Master and disciple sit in that calm and sweet accord, in which giver

and receiver are alike blessed, suddenly Martha appears and breaks into the interview, in a characteristically imperative sentence: "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her, therefore, that she help me."

Nothing could more energetically indicate Martha's character than this sentence. It shows her blunt sincerity, her conscientious, matter-of-fact worldliness, and her dictatorial positiveness. Evidently, here is a person accustomed to having her own way and bearing down all about her; a person who believes in herself without a doubt, and is so positive that her way is the only right one that she cannot but be amazed that the Master has not at once seen as she does. To be sure, this is in her view the Christ, the Son of God, the King of Israel, the human being whom in her deepest heart she reverences; but no matter, she is so positive that she is right that she does not hesitate to say her say, and make her complaint of him as well as of her sister. People like Martha often arraign and question the very providence of God itself when it stands in the way of their own plans. Martha is sure of her ground. Here is the Messiah, the King of Israel, at her house, and she is getting up an entertainment worthy of him, slaving herself to death for him, and he takes no notice, and most inconsiderately allows her dreamy sister to sit listening to him, instead of joining in the preparation.

The reply of Jesus went, as his replies were wont to do, to the very root-fault of Martha's life, the fault of all such natures: "Martha, Martha! thou art careful and troubled about many things, but *one* thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her." The Master's words evidently recognize that in that critical hour Mary had passed a boundary in her soul history, and made an attainment of priceless value.

She had gained something that could never be taken from her; and she had gained it by that single-hearted devotion to spiritual things which made her prompt to know and seize the hour of opportunity.

The brief narrative there intermits; we are not told how Martha replied, or what are the results of this plain, tender faithfulness of reproof. The Saviour, be it observed, did not blame Martha for her nature. He did not blame her for not being Mary; but he did blame her for not restraining and governing her own nature and keeping it in due subjection to higher considerations. A being of brighter worlds, he stood looking on Martha's life, — on her activities and bustle and care; and to him how sorrowfully worthless the greater part of them appeared! To him they were mere toys and playthings, such as a child is allowed to play with in the earlier, undeveloped hours of existence; not to be harshly condemned, but still utterly fleeting and worthless in the face of the tremendous eternal realities, the glories and the dangers of the eternal state.

It must be said here that all we know of our Lord leads us to feel that he was not encouraging and defending in Mary a selfish, sentimental indulgence in her own cherished emotions and affections, leaving the burden of necessary care on a sister who would have been equally glad to sit at Jesus' feet. That was not his reading of the situation. It was that Martha, engrossed in a thousand cares, burdened herself with a weight of perplexities of which there was no need, and found no time and had no heart to come to him and speak of the only, the one thing that endures beyond the present world. To how many hearts does this reproof apply? How many who call themselves Christians are weary, wasted, worn, drained of life, injured in health, fretted in temper, by a class of anxieties so purely worldly that they can never bring them to Christ, or if they do, would meet first and foremost his tender

reproof, "Thou art careful and troubled about many things; there is but *one* thing really needful. Seek that good part which shall never be taken away."

What fruit this rebuke bore will appear as we further pursue the history of the sister. The subsequent story shows that Martha was a brave, sincere, good woman, capable of yielding to reproof and acknowledging a fault. There is precious material in such, if only their powers be turned to the highest and best things.

It is an interesting thought that the human affection of Jesus for one family has been made the means of leaving on record the most consoling experience for the sorrows of bereavement that sacred literature affords. Viewed merely on the natural side, the intensity of human affections and the frightful possibilities of suffering involved in their very sweetness present a fearful prospect when compared with that stony inflexibility of natural law, which goes forth crushing, bruising, lacerating, without the least apparent feeling for human agony.

The God of nature appears silent, unalterable, unsympathetic, pursuing general good without a throb of pity for individual suffering; and that suffering is so unspeakable, so terrible! Close shadowing every bridal, every cradle, is this awful possibility of death that may come at any moment, unannounced and inevitable. The joy of this hour may become the bitterness of the next; the ring, the curl of hair, the locket, the picture, that to-day are a treasure of hope and happiness, to-morrow may be only weapons of bitterness that stab at every view. The silent inflexibility of God in upholding laws that work out such terrible agonies and suffering is something against which the human heart moans and chafes through all ancient literature. "The gods envy the happy," was the construction put upon the problem of life as the old sages viewed it.

But in this second scene of the story of the sisters of Bethany we have that view of God which is the only one powerful enough to soothe and control the despair of the stricken heart. It says to us that behind this seeming inflexibility, this mighty and most needful unholding of law, is a throbbing, sympathizing heart, — bearing with us the sorrow of this struggling period of existence, and pointing to a perfect fulfillment in the future.

The story opens most remarkably. In the absence of the Master, the brother is stricken down with deadly disease. Forthwith a hasty messenger is dispatched to Jesus. "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." Here is no prayer expressed; but human language could not be more full of all the elements of the best kind of prayer. It is the prayer of perfect trust — the prayer of love that has no shadow of doubt. If only we let Jesus know we are in trouble, we are helped. We need not ask, we need only say, "He whom thou lovest is sick," and he will understand, and the work will be done. We are safe with him.

Then comes the seeming contradiction — the trial of faith — that gives this story such a value: "Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When, therefore, he heard that he was sick, he abode two days in the same place where he was." Because he loved them, he delayed; because he loved them, he resisted that most touching appeal that heart can make, — the appeal of utter trust. We can imagine the wonder, the anguish, the conflict of spirit, when death at last shut the door in the face of their prayers. Had God forgotten to be gracious? Had he in anger shut up his tender mercy? Did not Jesus love them? Had he not power to heal? Why then had he suffered this? Ah! this is exactly the strait in which thousands of Christ's own beloved ones must stand in the future; and Mary and Martha, unconsciously

to themselves, were suffering with Christ in the great work of human consolation. Their distress and anguish and sorrow were necessary to work out a great experience of God's love, where multitudes of anguished hearts have laid themselves down as on a pillow of repose, and have been comforted.

Something of this is shadowed in the Master's words: "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, — that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." What was that glory of God? Not most his natural power, but his sympathetic tenderness, his loving heart. What is the glory of the Son of God? Not the mere display of power, but power used to console, in manifesting to the world that this cruel *death* — the shadow that haunts all human life, that appalls and terrifies, that scatters anguish and despair — is *not* death, but the gateway of a brighter life, in which Jesus shall restore love to love, in eternal reunion.

In the scene with the sisters before the Saviour arrives, we are struck with the consideration in which the family is held. This house is thronged with sympathizing friends, and, as appears from some incidents afterwards, friends among the higher classes of the nation. Martha hears of the approach of Jesus, and goes forth to meet him.

In all the scene which follows we are impressed with the dignity and worth of Martha's character. We see in the scene of sorrow that Martha has been the strong, practical woman, on whom all rely in the hour of sickness, and whose energy is equal to any emergency. We see her unsubdued by emotion, ready to go forth to receive Jesus, and prompt to meet the issues of the moment. We see, too, that the appreciation of the worth of her character, which had led him to admonish her against the materialistic tendencies of such a nature, was justified by the fruits of that rebuke. Martha had grown more spiritual

by intercourse with the Master, and as she falls at Jesus' feet, the half-complaint which her sorrow wrings from her is here merged in the expression of her faith: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died; but I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it to thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." Like every well-trained religious Jew of her day, Martha was versed in the doctrine of the general resurrection. That this belief was a more actively operating motive with the ancient Jewish than with the modern Christian Church of our day is attested by the affecting history of the martyrdom of the mother and her seven sons, in the Book of Maccabees. Martha therefore makes prompt answer, "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus answered her in words which no mere mortal could have uttered — words of a divine fullness of meaning — "I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though dead, shall live, and whosoever believeth in me is immortal."

In these words he claims to be the great source of Life, — the absolute Lord and Controller of all that relates to life, death, and eternity; and he makes the appeal to Martha's faith: "Believest thou this?" "Yea, Lord," she responds, "I believe thou art the Christ of God that should come into the world." And then she runs and calls her sister secretly, saying, "The Master is come and calleth for thee." As a majestic symphony modulates into a tender and pathetic minor passage, so the tone of the narrative here changes to the most exquisite pathos. Mary, attended by her weeping friends, comes and falls at Jesus' feet, and sobs out: "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died!"

It indicates the delicate sense of character which ever marked the intercourse of our Lord, that to this helpless,

heart-broken child prostrate at his feet he addresses no appeal to reason or faith. He felt within himself the overwhelming power of that tide of emotion which for the time bore down both reason and faith in helpless anguish. With such sorrow there was no arguing, and Jesus did not attempt argument; for the story goes on: "When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping that came with her, he groaned in spirit and was troubled; and he said, Where have ye laid him? And they said, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept." Those tears interpreted for all time God's silence and apparent indifference to human suffering; and wherever Christ is worshiped as the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person, they bear witness that the God who upholds the laws that wound and divide human affections still feels with us the sorrow which he permits. "In all our afflictions he is afflicted."

And now came the sublime and solemn scene when he who had claimed to be the Resurrection and the Life made good his claim. Standing by the grave he called, as he shall one day call to all the dead, "Lazarus, come forth!" And here the curtain drops over the scene of restoration.

We do not see this family circle again till just before the final scene of the great tragedy of Christ's life. The hour was at hand, of suffering, betrayal, rejection, denial, shame, agony, and death; and with the shadow of this awful cloud over his mind, Jesus comes for the last time to Jerusalem. To the eye of the thoughtless, Jesus was never so popular, so beloved, as at the moment when he entered the last week of his life at Jerusalem. Palm branches and flowers strewed his way, hosannas greeted him on every side, and the chief priests and Scribes said, "Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? Behold the world is gone after him!" But the mind of Jesus was wrapped in that awful shade of the events that were so soon to follow.

He passes out, after his first day in Jerusalem, to Bethany, and takes refuge in this dear circle. There they make him a feast, and Martha serves, but Lazarus, as a restored treasure, sits at the table. Then took Mary a pound of ointment, very precious, and anointed the head of Jesus, and anointed his feet with the ointment, and wiped them with her hair.

There is something in the action that marks the poetic and sensitive nature of Mary. Her heart was overburdened with gratitude and love. She longed to give something, and how little was there that she could give! She buys the most rare, the most costly of perfumes, breaks the vase, and sheds it upon his head. Could she have put her whole life, her whole existence, into that fleeting perfume and poured it out for him, she gladly would have done it. That was what the action said, and what Jesus understood. Forthwith comes the criticism of Judas: "What a waste! It were better to give the money to the poor than to expend it in mere sentimentalism." Jesus defended her with all the warmth of his nature, in words tinged with the presentiment of his approaching doom: "Let her alone; she is come aforehand to anoint my body for the burial." Then, as if deeply touched with the reality of that love which thus devoted itself to him, he adds, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the world, there shall what this woman hath done be had in remembrance." The value set upon pure love, upon that unconsidering devotion which gives its best and utmost freely and wholly, is expressed in these words. A loving God seeks love; and he who thus spoke is he who afterward, when he appeared in glory, declared his abhorrence of lukewarmness in his followers: "I would thou wert cold or hot; because thou art lukewarm I will spue thee out of my mouth." It is significant of the change which had passed upon Martha that no criticism of Mary's

action in this case came from her. There might have been a time when this inconsiderate devotion of a poetic nature would have annoyed her and called out remonstrance. In her silence we feel a sympathetic acquiescence.

After this scene we meet the family no more. Doubtless the three were among the early watchers upon the resurrection morning; doubtless they were of the number among whom Jesus stood after the resurrection, saying, "Peace be unto you;" doubtless they were of those who went out with him to the Mount of Olives when he was taken up into heaven; and doubtless they are now with him in glory: for it is an affecting thought that no human personality is ever lost or to be lost. In the future ages it may be our happiness to see and know those whose history has touched our hearts so deeply.

One lesson from this history we pray may be taken into every mourning heart. The Apostle says that Jesus upholds all things by the word of his power. The laws by which accident, sickness, loss, and death are constantly bringing despair and sorrow to sensitive hearts are upheld by that same Jesus who wept at the grave of Lazarus, and who is declared to be Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and forever. When we see the exceeding preciousness of human love in his eyes, and realize his sympathetic nature, and then remember that he is Resurrection and Life, can we not trust him with our best beloved, and look to him for that hour of reunion which he has promised?

The doctrine of the resurrection of the body is a precious concession to human weakness and human love. How dear the outward form of our child, — how distressing to think we shall never see it again! But Christ promises we shall. Here is a mystery. St. Paul says, that as the seed buried in the earth is to the new plant or flower, so is our present mortal body to the new immortal one that shall spring from it. It shall be our friend, our child,

familiar to us with all that mysterious charm of personal identity, yet clothed with the life and beauty of the skies; and then the Lord God will wipe away all tears from all faces.

XVI

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF JESUS

THERE was one great characteristic in the life of Jesus which his followers succeed in imitating less than any other, and that is a singular sweetness and attractiveness which drew toward him even the sinful and fallen. There are the most obvious indications in all the narrative that Christ's virtue was not of the repellent kind that drove sinners away from him, but that there was around him a peculiar charm and graciousness of manner which affected the most uncongenial characters.

We are all familiar with a style of goodness quite the reverse of this — a goodness that is terrible to evil-doers — a goodness that is instinctively felt to have no sympathy with the sinner. Such was the virtue of Christ's great forerunner, John the Baptist. He commanded, but did not charm; the attraction that drew men toward him was that of mingled fear and curiosity, but there was no tenderness in it. When the Scribes and Pharisees flocked to his baptism, he met them with a thunderbolt: "O generation of vipers! who hath warned *you* to flee from the wrath to come?" He declined all social joys; he would not eat or drink at men's tables; he dwelt alone in the deserts, appearing as a *Voice* — a voice of warning and terror! His disciples were few; he took no pains to make them more.

But even this stern and rugged nature felt the charm and sweetness of Jesus, as something different from him-

self. It is very touching to read how the peculiar demeanor of Jesus impressed this hardy old warrior: "And looking on Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world." The words seem as if they might have been said with tears in the eyes. Immediately two of his few disciples left him and followed Jesus; and he was content. "He must increase and I must decrease," he said humbly. "He that is from Heaven is above all."

We find that Jesus loved social life and the fellowship of men. Though he spent the first forty days after his mission began in the solitude of the desert, yet he returned from it the same warm-hearted and social being as before. The first appearance that he made was at a wedding-feast, and his very first miracle was wrought to enhance its joy. A wedding-feast in those lands meant more than with us. It was not merely an hour given to festivity, but lasted from three to seven days. There were large gatherings of relations and friends from afar; there were dances and songs, and every form of rejoicing; and at this particular feast in Cana it seems Jesus and his mother were present as honored and beloved guests. His gentleness and affability led his mother to feel that she might perhaps gain from him an aid to the inadequate provision made for the hospitality of the occasion. His reply to her has been deemed abrupt and severe. That it was not so understood by his mother herself is evident from the fact that she did not accept it as a refusal, but expected a compliance, and gave orders to prepare for it. It was necessary when among relatives in his family circle to express with great decision the idea that his miraculous powers were not to be considered as in any way under the control of his private and human affections, and that he must use them only as a Higher Power should direct.

His presence at this wedding was significant of that

divine love which ever watches over the family, and the wine that he gave symbolized that cheer and support which God's ever-present love and sympathy pours through all the life of the household. We gather incidentally from many seemingly casual statements that Jesus was often invited to feasts in the houses of both rich and poor, and cheerfully accepted these invitations even on the Sabbath day.

He seems to have been also especially attractive to little children; he loved them and noticed them; and it would seem from some parts of the Gospel narrative as if the little ones watched for his coming and ran to his arms instinctively. Their artless, loving smiles, their clear, candid eyes, reminded him of that world of love where he had dwelt before he came to our earth, and he said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." It was the sense that he loved little ones that led mothers to force their way with their infants through reproving and unsympathetic disciples; there was that about Jesus which made every mother sure that he would love her child, and that the very touch of his hands would bring a blessing upon it; and when his disciples treated the effort as an intrusion it is said "Jesus was much displeased." He did not merely accept or tolerate the movement, but entered into it with warmth and enthusiasm; he did not coldly lay the tips of his sacred fingers on them, but took them up in his arms and laid his hands on them and blessed them; he embraced them and held them to his heart as something that he would make peculiarly his own.

It is no wonder, therefore, that Jesus was the children's favorite, and that on his last triumphal entrance into Jerusalem the hosannas of the children in the temple should have been so loud and so persistent as to excite the anger of the priests and Scribes. They called on him to silence the little voices, as if they felt sure that he could control

them by a word; but that word Jesus refused to speak. The voices of these young birds of paradise were dear to him, and he said indignantly, "If these were forbidden to speak the very stones would cry out."

But still more remarkable is the fact that Jesus was attractive to a class who as a general thing hate and flee from religious teachers. The publicans and sinners, the disreputable and godless classes, felt themselves strangely drawn to him. If we remember how intensely bitter was the Jewish sense of degradation in being under Roman taxation, and how hardly and cruelly the office of collecting that tribute was often exercised, we may well think that only Jews who cared little for the opinions of their countrymen, and had little character to lose, would undertake it. We know there are in all our cities desperate and perishing classes inhabiting regions where it would be hardly safe for a reputable person to walk. Yet in regions like these the pure apparition of Jesus of Nazareth walked serene, and all hearts were drawn to him.

What was the charm about him, that he whose rule of morality was stricter than that of Scribes or Pharisees yet attracted and drew after him the most abandoned classes? They saw that he loved them. Yes, he really loved them. The infinite love of God looked through his eyes, breathed in his voice, and shed a persuasive charm through all his words. To the intellectual and cultured men of the better classes his word was, "Ye must be born again;" but to these poor wanderers he said, "Ye may be born again. All is not lost. Purity, love, a higher life, are all for you," — and he said it with such energy, such vital warmth of sympathy, that they believed him. They crowded round him and he welcomed them; they invited him to their houses and he went; he sat with them at table; he held their little ones in his arms; he gave himself to them. When the Scribes and Pharisees murmured

at this intimacy, he answered, "The whole need not the Physician, but those that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." His most beautiful parables, of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the Prodigal Son, were all poured out of the fullness of his heart for them — and what a heart! What news indeed, to these lost ones, to be told that their Father cared for them the more because they were lost; that he went after them because they wandered; and that all around the pure throne of God were pitying eyes watching for their return, and strong hands of welcome stretched out to aid them back. No wonder that the poor lost woman of the street had such a courage and hope awakened in her that she pressed through the sneering throng, and under the very eyes of Scribe and Pharisee found her refuge and rest at the gracious feet of such a Master. No wonder that Matthew the publican rose up at once from the receipt of custom and left all to follow that Jesus, who had taught him that he too might be a son of God.

And we read of one Zaccheus, a poor worldly little man, who had lived a hard, sharp, extortionate life, and perhaps was supposed to have nothing good in him; but even he felt a singular internal stir and longing for something higher, awakened by this preacher, and when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing he ran and climbed a tree that he might look on him as he passed. But the gracious Stranger paused under the tree, and a sweet, cheerful voice said, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for to-day I must dine at thy house." Trembling, scarce able to believe his good fortune, we are told he came down and received Jesus joyfully. Immediately, as flowers burst out under spring sunshine, awoke the virtues in that heart: "Lord, half my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken anything by false accusation I restore fourfold." This shows that the influence of Jesus was

no mere sentimental attraction, but a vital, spiritual force, corresponding to what was said of him: "As many as received him to them gave he power to become sons of God."

It is a mistake to suppose that wicked people are happy in wickedness. Wrong-doing is often a sorrowful chain and burden, and those who bear it are often despairingly conscious of their degradation.

Jesus carried with him the power not only to heal the body but to cure the soul, to give the vigor of a new spiritual life, the joy of a sense of recovered purity. He was not merely able to say, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," but also, "Go in peace;" and the peace was real and permanent.

Another reason for the attractiveness of Jesus was the value he set on human affections. The great ones of the earth often carry an atmosphere about them that withers the heart with a sense of insignificance. Every soul longs to be something to the object of its regard, and the thought, "My love is nothing to him," is a chilling one. But Christ asked for love — valued it. No matter how poor, how lowly, how sinful in time past, the love of a repentant soul he accepted as a priceless treasure. He set the loving sinner above the cold-hearted Pharisee. He asked not only for love, but for intimacy — he asked for the whole heart; and there are many desolate ones in this cheerless earth to whom it is a new life to know that a godlike Being cares for their love.

The great external sufferings of Christ and the prophetic prediction that he should be a "man of sorrows" have been dwelt upon so much that we sometimes forget the many passages in the New Testament which show that the spiritual atmosphere of Christ was one of joy. He brought to those that received him a sense of rest and peace and joy. St. John speaks of him as "LIGHT." He answered

those who asked why his disciples did not fast like those of John, by an image which showed that his very presence made life a season of festivity: "Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them?" What a beautiful picture of a possible life is given in his teaching. God he speaks of as "your Father." All the prophets and teachers that came before spoke of him as "the Lord." Christ called him simply "THE FATHER," as if to intimate that Fatherhood was the highest and most perfect expression of the great Invisible. He said, therefore, to the toiling race of man: "Be not anxious, your Father in Heaven will take care of you. He forgets not even a little sparrow, and he certainly will not forget you. Go to him with all your wants. You would not forget your children's prayers; and your Father in Heaven is better than you. Be loving, be kind, be generous and sweet-hearted; if men hate you, love and pray for them; and you will be your Father's children."

See how the man Jesus, who was to his disciples the Master, Christ, had power to comfort them in distress, and how not only his own followers, but also those of his great forerunner, John, were naturally drawn to confide their troubles to him.

These disciples who took up the Baptist's disfigured body after spite and contempt and hate had done their worst on it, who paid their last tribute of reverence and respect amid the scoffs of a jeering world, were men — men of deep emotions and keen feelings; and probably at that moment every capability of feeling they had was fully aroused.

It appears from the first chapter of John, that he and others were originally the disciples of the Baptist during the days of his first powerful ministry, and had been by him pointed to Jesus. We see in other places that the Apostle John had an intense power of indignation, and

was of that nature that longed to grasp the thunderbolts when he saw injustice. It was John that wanted to bring down fire from heaven on the village that refused to shelter Christ, and can we doubt that his whole soul was moved with the most fiery indignation at wrong and cruelty like this? For Christ himself had said of the martyr thus sacrificed: "Among those that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." He had done a great work; he had swayed the hearts of all his countrymen; he had been the instrument of the most powerful revival of religion known in his times. There had been a time when his name was in every mouth; when all Jerusalem and Judæa, and beyond Jordan, thronged to his ministry — even the Scribes and Pharisees joining the multitude. And now what an end of so noble a man! Seized and imprisoned at the behest of an adulterous woman whose sin he had rebuked, shut up in prison, his ministry ended, all his power for good taken away, and finally finishing his life under circumstances which mark more than any other could the contempt and indifference which the great gay world of his day had for goodness and greatness! The head of a national benefactor, of a man who had lived for God and man wholly and devotedly from his birth, was used as a football, made the subject of a court jest between the courtesan and the prince.

Oh that it had pleased God to give us the particulars of that interview when the disciples, burning, struggling under pressure of that cruel indignity, came and told Jesus! Can we imagine with what burning words John told of the scorn, the contempt, the barbarity with which the greatest man of his time had been hurried to a bloody grave? Were there not doubts — wonderings? Why did God permit it? Why was not a miracle wrought, if need were, to save him? And what did Jesus say to them? Oh that we knew! We would lay it up in our hearts, to

be used when in our lesser sphere we see things going in the course of this world as if God were not heeding. Of one thing we may be sure. Jesus made them quiet; he calmed and rested them.

And all that Jesus taught, he was. This life of sweet repose, of unruffled peace, of loving rest in an ever-present Father, he carried with him as he went, everywhere warming, melting, cheering; inspiring joy in the sorrowful and hope in the despairing; giving peace to the perplexed; and, last and best of all, in his last hours, when he sought to cheer his sorrowful disciples in view of his death and one of them said, "Lord, show us the Father and it will suffice," he answered, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." The Invisible Jehovah, the vast, strange, mysterious Will that moves all worlds and controls all destinies, reveals himself to us in the Man Jesus — the Christ.

We are told of an Old Testament prophet that sought to approach God. First there was a mighty tempest; but the Lord was not in the tempest. There was a devouring fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. There was an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. Then there came at last a "still, small voice:" and when the prophet heard that he wrapped his face in his mantle and bowed himself to the earth.

The tempest, the earthquake, the fire, are the Unknown God of Nature; the still, small voice is that of Jesus!

It is to this Teacher so lovable, this Guide so patient and so gracious, that our Heavenly Father has committed the care and guidance of us through this dark, uncertain life of ours. He came to love us, to teach us, to save us; and not merely to save us, but to save us in the kindest and gentlest way. He gives himself wholly to us, for all that he can be to us, and in return asks us to give ourselves wholly to him. Shall we not do it?

XVII

THE TOLERANCE OF JESUS

"We saw one casting out devils, and he followed not us; and we forbade him. And Jesus said, Forbid him not."

THERE is nothing in which our Lord so far exceeds all his followers as in that spirit of forbearance and tolerance which he showed toward every effort, however imperfect, which was dictated by a sincere spirit. Human virtue as it grows intense is liable to grow narrow and stringent; but divine love has an infinite wideness of allowance.

We are told of the first triumphant zeal of the twelve Apostles when, endued with miraculous power, they went forth healing the sick, casting out devils, and preaching the good news of the kingdom to the poor. They came back to Jesus exulting in their new success, and we are told they said unto him, "Lord, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and we forbade him, because he followed not us."

Jesus said unto them, "Forbid him not, for there is no man that will do a miracle in my name that will lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our side."

Here our Lord recognizes the principle that those who seek what he is seeking, and are striving to do what he is doing, are in fact on his side, even although they may not see their way clear to follow the banner of his commissioned Apostles and work in their company. Christ's mission as he defined it was a mission of healing and saving, a mission of consolation and the relief of human misery; and this man who was trying to cast out the devils in his name was doing his work and moving in his line, although not among his professed disciples.

Jesus always recognized the many "sheep not of this fold" which he had in this world — people who were his followers by unity of intention with what he intended, though they might never have known him personally. He tells the Jews, who believed in a narrow and peculiar church, that "many shall come from the East and the West, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven," and in his pictures of the last Judgment he makes the final award turn on the simple unity of spirit and purpose with Him in his great work of mercy for mankind.

We see intimated that the accepted ones are amazed to find themselves recognized as having shown personal regard to Christ, and say, "Lord, when saw we thee hungry or athirst or in prison and ministered to thee?" And the reply is, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." A more solemn declaration cannot be given, that our Lord accepts the spirit which is in unison with his great work of mercy for mankind, as the best offering of love to himself; and in this sense it is true that no man who would seek to do miracles of mercy in His spirit could lightly speak evil of him.

In this case our Lord might have seen that the arrogant, dictatorial temper which had come upon his followers in the flush of their first success might have disgusted and repelled a sincere man who was really trying to help on the good work in which Christ was engaged; and perhaps he may now see, as he looks down among our churches here and there, some good man in his own peculiar way seeking to do the work of the Lord, yet repelled from following in the train of his professed disciples. Instead of forbidding such "because they follow not us," he would have us draw them towards us by sympathy in the good they are doing, trusting in our Lord to enlighten them wherever they may need more distinct light.

The Protestant must not forbid the Romanist mission whose plain object seems to be to call sinners to repentance, and to lead professing Christians to a higher and holier life; nor must the Romanist in the pride of ancient authority forbid the Protestant evangelist that is seeking to make known the love of Jesus. And there are men in our times, of pure natures and of real love for mankind, whose faith in divine revelation is shaken, who no longer dare to say they believe with the "orthodox," but who yet are faithfully striving to do good to man, to heal the sick and cast out the devils that afflict society. Sad-hearted men are they often, working without the cheer that inspires the undoubting believer, often under a sense of the ban of the professed followers of Christ; yet the infinite tolerance of our Lord is leading them as well as those who more formally bear his name.

It was Cyrus, the Persian king, who worshiped the Zoroastrian gods, that is called in the prophecy "God's shepherd;" to whom God says, "Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, I girded thee, though thou hast not known me."

Let us hope that there are many whose right hand Christ is holding, though they as yet know him not; for He it is who says: —

"I will bring the blind by a way they know not. I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight: these things will I do unto them and not forsake them."

It pleased our Lord to number among the twelve Apostles one of those natures which are constitutionally cautious and skeptical. Thomas had a doubting head but a loving heart; he clung to Christ by affinity of spirit and personal love, with a slow and doubting intellect. Whether Jesus were the Messiah, the King of Israel, destined to reign and conquer, Thomas, though sometimes hoping, was somewhat prone to doubt. He was all the while foreboding

that Christ would be vanquished, while yet determined to stand by him to the last. When Christ announced his purpose to go again into Judæa, where his life had been threatened, Thomas says, — and there seems to be a despairing sigh in the very words, — "Let us also go, that we may die with him." The words seemed to say, "this man may be mistaken, after all; but, living or dying, I must love him, and if he dies, I die too."

Well, the true-hearted doubter lived to see his Lord die, and he it was, of all the disciples, who refused to believe the glad news of the resurrection. No messenger, no testimony, nothing that anybody else had seen could convince him. He must put his own hand into the print of the nails or he will not believe. The gracious Master did not refuse the test. "Reach hither thy finger and behold my hand, and reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side, and be not faithless but believing," he said, and the doubter fell at his feet and cried, "My Lord and my God!"

There was but a gentle word of reproof: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed." It is this divine wideness of spirit, this tolerance of love, that is the most characteristic element in the stages which mark the higher Christian life. Such spirits as Fénelon, Francis de Sales, John Woolman, and the apostle Eliot, seem to have risen to the calm regions of clear-sighted love. Hence the maxim of Fénelon: "Only perfection can tolerate the imperfect." But we, in our way to those regions, must lay down our harsh judgments of others; we must widen our charity; and, as we bless our good Shepherd for his patience with our wanderings and failures, must learn to have patience with those of our neighbors.

XVIII

THE SILENCE OF JESUS

In the history of our Lord's life nothing meets us more frequently than his power of reticence. It has been justly observed that the things that he did *not* say and do are as just a subject of admiration as the things that he said and did.

There is no more certain indication of inward strength than the power of silence. Hence the proverb that speech is silver and silence is golden. The Church of the middle ages had her treatises on "The Grace of Silence."

In the case of our Lord we have to remember first the thirty years of silence that preluded his ministry; thirty years in which he lived the life of a humble artisan in the obscure town of Nazareth. That he was during those years revolving all that higher wisdom which has since changed the whole current of human society there is little doubt. That his was a spirit from earliest life ardent and eager, possessed with the deepest enthusiasm, we learn from the one revealing flash in the incident recorded of his childhood, when he entered the school of the doctors in the temple and became so absorbed in hearing and asking questions that time, place, and kindred were all forgotten. Yet, eager as he was, he made no petulant objection to his mother's recall, but went down to Nazareth with his parents and was subject to them. This ardent soul retreated within itself, and gathered itself up in silence and obedience.

When, at the age of thirty, he rose in the synagogue of his native place and declared his great and beautiful mission it is quite evident that he took everybody by surprise. No former utterances, nothing in his previous life, had

prepared his townsfolk for this. They said, "How knoweth this man letters? Is not this the carpenter?" What habitual silence and reticence is here indicated! For this was the same Jesus whose words, when he did speak, had that profound and penetrating power that stirred the hearts of men, and have gone on since stirring them as no other utterances ever did. But when he did speak his words were more mighty from the accumulated force of repression. They fell concentrated and sparkling like diamonds that had been slowly crystallizing in those years of silence; they were utterances for time and for eternity.

In like manner we see numerous indications that he withdrew from all that was popular and noisy and merely sensational with a deep and real distaste. So far as possible he wrought his miracles privately. He enjoined reticence and silence on his disciples. He said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." He pointed to the grain of mustard seed and the hidden leaven as types of its power.

In the same way we see him sometimes receiving in silence prayers for help which he intended to answer. When the Syro-Phœnician woman cried to him to heal her daughter, it is said "he answered her never a word;" yet healing was in his heart. His silence was the magnet to draw forth her desire, to intensify her faith and reveal to his disciples what there was in her.

So, too, when word was sent from the sisters of Bethany, "Lord, behold he whom thou lovest is sick," he received it in the same silence. It is said, "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus; when he had heard, therefore, that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was." In those two days of apparent silent neglect, how many weary hours to the anxious friends watching for him who *could* help, and who yet did not come! But the silence and the wailing ended in a

deeper joy at the last. The sorrow of one family was made the means of a record of the Saviour's tenderness and sympathy and his triumphant power over death, which is for all time and for every mourner. As he gave Lazarus back whole and uninjured from the grave, so he then and there promised to do for every one who believes in him: "He that believeth on me shall never die."

In the family of the Saviour was a false friend whose falseness was better known to the Master than perhaps to himself. He knew the falsity of Judas to his trust in the management of the family purse, yet he was silent. He sought the sympathy of no friend; he did not expose him to the others. From time to time he threw out general warnings that there was one among them that was untrue — warnings addressed to *his* conscience alone. But he changed in no degree his manner toward him; he did not withhold the kiss at meeting and parting, nor refuse to wash his feet with the others; and the traitor went out from the last meeting to finish his treachery, leaving his brethren ignorant of his intended crime. This loving, forbearing silence with an enemy — keeping him in his family, treating him with unchanging love yet with warning faithfulness, never uttering a word of complaint and parting at last in sorrow more than anger — was the practical comment left by Jesus on his own words: "Love your enemies, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." This, the last, the highest grade in the science of love, is one that few Christians even come within sight of. To bear an enemy near one's person, perfectly to understand his machinations, and yet feel only unchanging love and pity, carefully to guard his character, never to communicate to another the evil that we perceive, to go on in kindness as the sunshine goes on in nature — this is

an attainment so seldom made that when made it is hard to be understood. If the example of Jesus is to be the rule by which our attainments are finally to be measured, who can stand in the judgment?

The silence of Jesus in his last trial before Herod and Pilate is no less full of sublime suggestion. We see him standing in a crowd of enemies clamorous, excited, eager, with false witnesses distorting his words, disagreeing with each other, agreeing only in one thing: the desire for his destruction. And Pilate says, "Answerest thou nothing? Behold how many things they witness against thee." It was the dead silence that more than anything else troubled and perplexed the Roman governor. After he has given up his victim to the brutalities of the soldiery, to the scourging and the crown of thorns, he sends for him again for a private examination. "Whence art thou? Speakest thou not to me? Knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee and power to release thee?" In all the brief replies of Jesus there is no effort to clear himself, no denial of the many things witnessed against him. In fact, from the few things that he did say on the way to the cross, it would seem that his soul abode calmly in that higher sphere of love in which he looked down with pity on the vulgar brutality that surrounded him. The poor ignorant populace shouting they knew not what, the wretched scribes and chief priests setting the seal of doom on their nation, the stolid Roman soldiers trained in professional hardness and cruelty — he looked down on them all with pity. "Daughters of Jerusalem," he said to the weeping women, "weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children." And a few moments later, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

We are told by the Apostles that this Jesus is the image of the invisible God. The silence of God in presence of so much that moves human passions is one of the most

awful things for humanity to contemplate. But if Jesus is his image this silence is not wrathful or contemptuous, but full of pity and forgiveness.

The silence and the great darkness around the cross of Calvary were not the silence of gathering wrath and doom. God, the forgiving, was there, and the way was preparing for a new and unequaled era of forgiving mercy. The rejected Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, not to fulfill a mission of wrath, but to "give repentance and remission of sins."

XIX

THE SECRET OF PEACE

Peace! Is there in fact such a thing as an attainable habit of mind that can remain at peace, no matter what external circumstances may be? No matter what worries; no matter what perplexities, what thwartings, what cares, what dangers; no matter what slanders, what revilings, what persecutions — is it possible to keep an immovable peace? When our dearest friends are taken from us, when those we love are in deadly danger from hour to hour, is it possible still to be in peace? When our plans of life are upset, when fortune fails, when debt and embarrassment come down, is it possible to be at peace? When suddenly called to die, or to face sorrows that are worse than death, is it possible still to be at peace?

Yes, it is. This is the peculiarity of the Christian religion — the special gift of Christ to every soul that will receive it from him. In his hour of deepest anguish, when every earthly resort was failing him, when he was about to be deserted, denied, betrayed, tortured even unto death, he had this great gift of peace, and he left it as a legacy to his followers: —

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you."

He says himself that his peace is not what the world giveth. It does not come from anything in this life; it cannot be taken away by anything in this life; it is wholly divine. As a white dove looks brighter and fairer against a black thunder-cloud, so Christ's peace is brightest and sweetest in darkness and adversity.

Is not this rest of the soul, this perfect peace, worth having? Do the majority of Christians have it? Would it not lengthen the days and strengthen the health of many a man and woman if they could attain it? But how shall we get this gift? That is an open secret. St. Paul told it to the Philippians in one simple direction: —

"Be not anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God that passeth understanding shall keep your heart and mind."

There we have it.

Now if we look back to the history of these Philippians, as told in the Book of Acts, we shall see that when Paul exhorted them never to be anxious about anything, but always with thanksgiving to let their wants be known to God, he preached exactly what they had seen him practice among them. For this Philippian church was at first a little handful of people gathered to Jesus by hearing Paul talk in a prayer-meeting held one Sunday morning by the riverside. There Lydia, the seller of fine linen from Thyatira, first believed with her house, and a little band of Christians was gathered. But lo! in the very commencement of the good work a tumult was raised, and Paul and Silas were swooped down upon by the jealous Roman authorities, ignominiously and cruelly scourged, and then carried to prison and shut up with their feet fast in the stocks. Here was an opportunity to test their

serenity. Did their talisman work, or did it fail? What did the Apostles do? We are told: "At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God, and the prisoners heard them." That prayer went up with a shout of victory — it was as Paul directs, prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. Then came the opening of prison doors, the loosing of bonds, and the jailer fell trembling at the feet of his captives, saying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And that night the jailer and all his house were added to the church at Philippi. So, about eleven years after, when Paul's letter came back from Rome to the Philippian church and was read out in their prayer-meeting, we can believe that the old Roman jailer, now a leading brother in the church, said, "Ay! ay! he teaches just what he practised. I remember how he sung and rejoiced there in that old prison at midnight. Nothing ever disturbs him." And they remember, too, that this cheerful, joyful, courageous letter comes from one who is again a prisoner, chained night and day to a Roman soldier, and it gives all the more force to his inspiring direction: "Be anxious for nothing — in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

If Paul had been like us, now, how many excuses he might have had for being in a habitual worry! How was he shut up and hindered in his work of preaching the gospel. A prisoner at Rome while churches that needed him were falling into divers temptations for want of him — how he might have striven with his lot, how he might have wondered why God allowed the enemy so to triumph.

But it appears he was perfectly quiet. "I know how to be abased, and how to abound," he says; "everywhere, and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and suffer need. I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me."

But say some, "Do you suppose if you go to God about everything that troubles you it will do any good? If you do ask him for help, will you get it?"

If this means, Will God always give you the blessing you want, or remove the pain you feel, in answer to your prayer? the answer must be, Certainly not.

Paul prayed often and with intense earnestness for the removal of a trial so sharp and severe that he calls it a thorn in his flesh. It was something that he felt to be unbearable, and he prayed the Lord to take it away, but the Lord did not; he only said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee. My strength is made perfect in weakness."

The permission in all things to let our requests be made known to God would be a fatal one for us if it meant that God would always give us what we ask. When we come to see the record of our life as it is written in heaven, we shall see some of our best occasions of thankfulness under the head of "prayers denied."

Did you ever see a little child rushing home from school in hot haste, with glowing cheeks and tearful eyes, burning and smarting under some fancied or real injustice or injury in his school life? He runs through the street; he rushes into the house; he puts off every one who tries to comfort him. "No, no! he does n't want them; he wants mother; he 's going to tell mother." And when he finds her he throws himself into her arms and sobs out to her all the tumult of his feelings, right or wrong, reasonable or unreasonable. "The school is hateful; the teacher is hard, and the lessons are too long; he can't learn them, and the boys laugh at him, and won't she say he need n't go any more?"

Now, though the mother does not grant his foolish petitions, she soothes him by sympathy; she calms him; she reasons with him; she inspires him with courage to meet the necessary trials of school life — in short, her grace is

sufficient for her boy; her strength perfects his weakness. He comes out tranquilized, calm, and happy — not that he is going to get his own foolish wishes, but that his mother has taken the matter in hand and is going to look into it, and the right thing is going to be done.

This is an exact illustration of the kind of help it is for us "in everything by prayer to make known our requests to God." The very act of confidence is in itself tranquilizing, and the divine sympathy meets and sustains it.

A large class of our annoyances and worries are extinguished or lessened by the very act of trying to tell them to such a person as Jesus Christ. They are our burning injuries, our sense of wrong and injustice done us. When we go to tell Jesus how cruelly and wickedly some other Christian has treated us, we immediately begin to feel as a child who is telling his mother about his brother — both equally dear. Our anger gradually changes to a kind of sorrow when we think of Him as grieved by our differences. After all, we are speaking of one whom Christ is caring for and bearing with just as he is caring for us, and the thought takes away the edge of our indignation; a place is found for peace.

Then there is still another class of troubles that would be cut off and smothered altogether by the honest effort to tell them to our Saviour. All the troubles that come from envy, from wanting to be as fine, as distinguished, as successful as our neighbors; all the troubles that come from running races with our neighbors in dress, household show, parties, the strife "who shall be the greatest" transferred to the little petty sphere of fashionable life — ah, if those who are burdened with cares of this kind would just once honestly bring them to Jesus and hear what he would have to say about them! They might leave them at his feet and go away free and happy.

But whatever burden or care we take to Jesus, if we

would get the peace promised, we must *leave* it with Him as entirely as the little child leaves his school troubles with his mother. We must come away and treat it as a finality. We must say, Christ has taken that. Christ will see about it. And then we must stop thinking and worrying about it. We must resolve to be satisfied with whatever may be his disposal of the matter, even if it is not at all what we would have chosen.

Paul would much sooner have chosen to be free and travel through the churches, but Christ decided to allow him to remain a chained prisoner at Rome, and there Paul learned to rest, and he was happy in Christ's will. Christ settled it for him, and he was at peace.

If, then, by following this one rule we can always be at rest, how true are the lines of the hymn now so often sung: —

> "Oh, what joy we often forfeit!
> Oh, what needless pain we bear!
> All because we do not carry
> Everything to God in prayer."

XX

THE CHURCH OF THE MASTER

What is the true idea of a Christian church, and what the temper and spirit in which its affairs should be conducted?

For this inquiry certainly we are not to go back to New England or Cotton Mather primarily, nor yet to the earlier Anglican authorities, or the long line of Roman precedent, and the Fathers of the Church, nor even to the Apostolic churches, but to Jesus Christ himself, and to the earliest association that could be called a Christian church.

There is a difference in this discussion between *the* Church and *a* church. *The* Church is the great generic

unity or outside organization; *a* church is a society related to the whole, as a private family to the State.

In the time of our Lord the generic body — *the* Church of God — was the Jewish church. Jesus was a regularly initiated member of that church, and very careful never to depart from any of its forms or requirements. He announced in the Sermon on the Mount that, in regard to the Jewish law, he was not come to destroy but to fulfill. He said distinctly to his disciples: "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do ye not after their works, for they say and do not." The Apostles never separated formally from the Jewish church. They were so careful in this regard that they on one occasion induced St. Paul, who was reported to be a schismatic, to go in a very marked and public manner into the Jewish temple and conform to the Jewish ritual; and when he addressed a company of Jews on one occasion he commenced with the words: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee." He elsewhere speaks of the perfectness of this initiation into all the customs and privileges of the national church — that he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

The Christian Church arose inside the Jewish church, exactly as the Methodists arose inside the Church of England. They were a society professing subjection and obedience to the national church in all respects where the higher law of God did not require them to go against earthly ordinances. Thus, when the Jewish Sanhedrim forbade the Apostles to preach in the name of Jesus, they answered, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." In like spirit did John Wesley and his ministers answer the bishops when they tried to shut their mouths from preaching the gospel to the poor of England.

But in the mean time it is to be remembered that the Lord Jesus gradually formed around himself as a personal centre an organization of disciples, both men and women. This band of disciples may be looked upon as the seed form of the Christian Church, and the order of their union having been administered immediately by the Master must be studied as conveying the best example of the spirit and temper, though not necessarily the exact form, in which all churches should be constituted.

That this company of believers was regularly organized, and perfectly recognized as an organization, appears from a passage in Acts, where it is said that after the ascension of our Lord this little church came together and abode together for several days. The names of many of them are given — the eleven Apostles, the mother of Jesus, his brethren, and several others, called in the enumeration "the women," are mentioned, and it is further stated that "the number of them was about one hundred and twenty."

St. Paul indeed speaks of an occasion on which Christ, after his resurrection, appeared to five hundred disciples at once, of whom he says the greater part were living when he wrote. This hundred and twenty were probably such a portion of the whole company of disciples as had their residence in and about Jerusalem, and could therefore conveniently assemble together. We first see them called together to perform a corporate act in filling a vacancy among their officers. The twelve by the appointment of the Lord had occupied a peculiar position of leadership. The place of one of these being vacated by the death of Judas, the little church is summoned to assist in the election of a successor. The speech of Peter is remarkable as showing that he considered the persons he addressed as a body competent to transact business and fill vacancies. After relating the death and fate of Judas, he ends by saying, "Wherefore, from these men that have companied

with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection." Here, then, are all the evidences of a regularly trained church already in existence when our Lord left the world.

But if we look at the twentieth chapter of John we shall see that the little company that performed this act had been previously ordained and inspired by Jesus, and wisdom had been promised to guide their proceedings.

It is said that immediately after Christ's resurrection — after he had appeared to Mary Magdalene — he suddenly appeared in an assembly of the disciples, showed them his hands and his side, said to them, "Peace be unto you," breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whosesoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained." The disciples spoken of here were the whole company of believers who yet remained faithful — not merely the eleven, since one of the eleven at least was absent.

The words of the promise are not to be superstitiously interpreted, as they have been, as giving an arbitrary, irresponsible power to an aristocracy in the church, but as expressing this great truth: that whenever a body of Christians are acting under the influence of the Holy Spirit, under a high and heavenly state of Christian feeling, their decisions will be in sympathy with God and be ratified in heaven. It is only to those who receive the Holy Ghost that such power pertains.

Having shown, then, that Christ left a trained, inspired, ordained church of believers to perpetuate his work on earth, it now becomes interesting to go back and watch the process by which he trained them.

The history of the formation and gradual education of this church is interesting, because, although the visible presence of the Master made it differ from any subsequent

church, yet the spirit and temper in which he guided it are certainly a model for all. Christ's visible presence relieved them from all responsibility as to discipline. He governed personally, and settled every question as it rose. In this respect no other church can be like it. But the invisible Christ, the Christ in the heart of all believers, ought to be with every church, that it may be carried on in *spirit* as Christ conducted his.

In the first place, then, Christ carried on this his first church as a family, of which he was the father, and in which the law was love. He said to his disciples, "All ye are brethren;" he addressed them habitually as "children," sometimes as "little children," and laid on them with emphasis a *new* commandment, that they should love one another as he had loved them. The old commandment, given by Moses, was, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; the new commandment of Christ was, Love one another as I have loved you — better than self. St. John interprets this thus: Hereby we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. We ought also to lay down our lives for the brethren.

This church or family of Christ was very wide and free in its invitation to any to join, and many did join themselves, so that at times portions of them traveled with him as a missionary family from place to place.

Thus, in Luke viii., we read that "it came to pass that he went through every city and village preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom; and the twelve were with him, and certain women whom he had healed of evil spirits and infirmities; Mary, called Magdalene, and Joanna, the wife of Chusa, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who also ministered unto him of their substance."

This coöperation of women in the missionary church would in some countries have given an occasion of offense

and scandal. But the laws and institutions of Moses had prepared a nation in which the moral and religious mission of woman was fully recognized. Prophetesses and holy women, inspired by God, had always held an important place in its history, and it was in full accord with the national sense of propriety that woman should hold a conspicuous place in the new society of Jesus. It is remarkable, too, that the bitterest and most vituperative attacks on the character of Jesus which appeared in early centuries never found cause of scandal in this direction.

These pious women exercised, for the benefit of our Lord and his disciples, the peculiar gifts of their sex — they ministered to them as women best know how. One of them was the wife of a man of high rank in Herod's court. Several of them appear to have been possessed of property. Some of them, however, were reclaimed women of formerly sinful life, but now redeemed. The wife of Herod's steward, and the spotless matron, the mother of James and John, did not scruple to receive to their fellowship and sisterly love the redeemed Mary Magdalene, "out of whom went seven devils."

The contributions for the support of this mission church became so considerable, and the care of providing for its material wants so onerous, as to require the services of a steward, and one of the twelve, who had a peculiar turn for financial cares, was appointed to this office. Judas made all the purchases for the company, dispensed its charities, and, as financier, felt at liberty to comment severely on the "waste" shown by the grateful Mary.

It seems that Judas was a type of that class of men who seek the church from worldly motives. The treatment of this treacherous friend by Jesus is a model that cannot be too earnestly studied by every Christian. St. John says, "Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him." But he carried

himself towards him with the same unvarying and tender sweetness that he showed to all the rest. He was Love itself. He could not possibly associate with another without love, and there was something peculiarly delicate and forbearing in his treatment of Judas (as is more fully considered in our next chapter).

He might easily have exposed him before his brethren, but he would not do it. It seems from the narrative that even when Judas left the little company to complete his crime, the simple-hearted disciples knew not where he was going.

There was no calling him to account, no exposure, no denunciation, no excommunication. Why this care, this peculiar reticence, on the Master's part? It was a part of his system of teaching his family what he meant when he said, Love your enemies. It was a way of teaching that, when they came to understand it fully, they never would forget. Moreover, during his whole life, in all his teachings to this little church, his main object was that they should be rooted and grounded in that kind of love which no injury, or cruelty, or perfidy can change, the kind of love which he showed when he prayed for those who were piercing his hands and feet. But he found them not apt scholars. They were apt and ready in the science of wrath. With them the way of anger and what is called righteous indignation went down hill, but he always held them back. When a village refused to receive the Master, it was James and John who were ready to propose to call down fire from heaven, as Elias did. But he told them they knew not what manner of spirit they were of; the mission of the Son of man was to save — not to kill.

As a delicate musician shudders to strike a discord, so Jesus would not excite among his little children the tumult of wrath and indignation that would be sure to arise did they fully know the treachery of Judas. He so

carried himself that the evil element departed from them without a convulsion, by the calm expulsive force of moral influences. He bore with Judas patiently, sweetly, lovingly, to the very last. He kept the knowledge of his treachery in his own bosom till of his own free will the traitor departed.

There is something so above human nature in this — it is such unworldly sweetness, such celestial patience, that it is difficult for us at our usual level of life to understand it. It is difficult to realize that these expressions of love which Jesus continued to Judas were not a policy, but a simple reality, that he loved and pitied the treacherous friend as a mother loves and pities the unworthy son who is whitening her hair and breaking her heart, and that the kiss he gave was always sincere.

It is an example, too, that may with advantage be studied in conducting the discipline of a church. Here was the worst of criminals meditating the deepest injuries, the worst of crimes, in the very bosom of the infant church, yet our Lord so bore with him, so ruled and guided his little family that there was no quarrel and struggle, — that the very best and most was made of his talents as long as they could be used for good, — and when he departed the church was not rent and torn as a demoniac by the passage from them of an evil spirit.

But there were other respects in which Jesus trained his church, besides that of managing a discordant element within it. There were many who would become disciples from sudden impulse or sympathy, who had not the moral stamina to go on to spiritual perfection. Aware of this, the Master, while ever gracious, ever ready to receive, exacted no binding pledge or oath. He displayed no eagerness to get men to commit themselves in this way, but rather the reverse. Whoever came saying, "Lord, I will follow thee," met a gracious reception. Yet the

seeker was warned that he must take up his cross, and that without this he could not be a disciple. He was admonished to count the cost, lest he should begin to build and not be able to finish. In some cases, as that of the young nobleman, the tests proposed were so severe that the man went away sorrowful; and yet, for all this, the heart of the Master was freely open to all who chose to follow him.

But as Jesus would take none without full warning of the stringency of his exactions, so he would retain none a moment beyond the time when their hearts were fully in it. Free they were to come as God's love is free — free also to go, if on trial they found the doctrine or discipline too hard for them. Christ gathered his spiritual army on the principles on which Moses commanded that the army of Israel should be gathered for battle, when proclamation was made that any one who for any reason was not fully in good heart should go home, "What man is fearful or faint-hearted, let him go and return to his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his."

There is a very striking passage in the sixth chapter of John's Gospel, where Jesus, in the most stringent and earnest manner, spoke of the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood; or, in other words, of an appropriating and identifying union of soul with himself as constituting true discipleship. This exposé of the inner depths of real spiritual life repelled some, as it is written: —

> "Many, therefore, of his disciples said: This is a hard saying. Who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured, he said: Doth this offend you? . . . But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who believed not and who should betray him."

From that time, we are told, *many* of his disciples went

back and walked no more with him. They left the church; and we read of no effort to discipline or retain them. The spiritual life of the church expelled them by the law of moral repulsion; they felt they were not of it, and they left, and were suffered to leave. The only comment we read of as being made by the Lord was this: "Then said Jesus to the twelve: Will ye also go away?" There was the door, freely open, would they, too, go? Then said Peter: "Lord, to whom should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ."

We can see here what was the sifting process by which our Lord kept his little church pure. It was the union of vivid spirituality with perfect freedom. The doors of entrance and of exit were freely open; and those who could not bear the intense and glowing spiritual life were at all times free to depart; in the words subsequently used by the Apostle, "they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life." Hence, like a vigorous human body, Christ's little church threw out from itself the unvital members, and kept itself healthy and strong. This perfect freedom to depart at any time constituted the strength of the little order. Its members were held together, not by a dead covenant, not by a conventional necessity, not by past vows uttered in high excitement — but by a living choice of the soul, renewed from moment to moment. Even the twelve had presented to them the choice to go away, and took anew their vow of constancy. Hence it was that even the astounding horrors of the sudden fall — the crucifixion of the Master — did not break their ranks. There were none left but those so vitally united to him, so "one with him" that, as he said, they "lived by him." He was their life; they followed him to the cross and to the grave; they watched the sepulchre, and were ready to meet him in the resurrection morning. It was this tried

and sifted remnant to whom he appeared when the doors were closed, after the resurrection, on whom he breathed peace and the Holy Ghost, and whose spiritual judgments and decisions he promised should thereafter be ratified in heaven.

This little company were, as nearly as human beings can be, rooted and grounded in perfect love. The lesson of their lives had been love, taught them by precept from day to day, as he harmonized their contentions and repressed their selfish ambitions; and by example, as he persistently tolerated, loved, bore with a treacherous friend in his own family.

It was necessary that they should be prepared to exercise power, for power was about to be intrusted to them. It was necessary to prepare them to be the governors of the future Christian Church. But he was unwearied in efforts to make them understand that superiority must only be a superiority in doing and suffering for others. When the mother of James and John asked the highest two offices for her two sons, he looked at her with a pathetic sadness. Did she know what she was asking? Did she know that to be nearest to him was to suffer most? He answered: "You know not what you ask. Can you drink of the cup that I shall drink, and be baptized with my baptism?" And when they ignorantly said, "We are able," he said that the place of superiority was not his to give by any personal partiality, but was reserved for the appointment of the Father. But the ambitious spirit now roused had spread to the other disciples. It is said that when the ten heard it they were indignant with James and John. But Jesus called them to him and said: —

"Ye know that they that are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever shall be great among you let him be your

minister, and whosoever will be the chiefest let him be servant of all; for even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many."

One of the very last acts of his life, and one of the most affecting comments on these words, was his washing his disciples' feet as a menial servant — a last significant act, which might almost be called a sacrament, since by it he, in view of his dying hour, put this last impressive seal on his teaching of humanity and brotherly love.

The contest which should be the greatest, in spite of all his efforts, all his teachings, all his rebukes, had only smouldered, not been extinguished, and was ready at any moment to flame out again, and all the way up to Jerusalem when he came to die they walked behind him quarreling over this old point. As a dying mother calling her children around her confirms her life-teaching by some last act of love never to be forgotten, so this Master and Friend before the last supper knelt in humility at the feet of each disciple and washed and wiped them, and then interpreted the act as a sign of the spirit in which leadership in his church should be sought: "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another's feet." In after years the disciples could not but remember that Jesus knelt at the feet of Judas and washed them as meekly as those of all the rest; and then they saw what he meant when he said, "Love your enemies."

From first to last the teaching of Christ was one long teaching of the doctrine and discipline of perfect love. When the multitudes followed him, and he went into a mountain to give his summary of the new dispensation, we hear of no high, mystical doctrines. We hear doctrines against censoriousness, against the habit of judging others. We hear men cautioned to look on their own faults, not on those of others. We hear love like the perfect love of God set up as the great doctrine of the new

kingdom — love which no injury, no unworthiness, no selfishness can chill, or alter, or turn aside; which, like God's providence, shines on the evil and unthankful, and sends rain on the just and the unjust — this mystery of love, deeper than the mystery of the Trinity, was what, from first to last, the Master sought to make his little church comprehend.

This love to enemies, this forgiveness, was the hardest of hard doctrines to them. "Lord, how often shall my brother transgress and I forgive him?" says Peter; "till seven times?" "Nay," answers Jesus, "till seventy times seven." "If thy brother trespass against thee seven times a day, and seven times turn again saying, 'I repent,' thou shalt forgive him." The Master taught that no religious ordinance, no outward service, was so important as to maintain *love* unbroken. If a gift were brought to the altar, and there it were discovered that a brother were grieved or offended, the gift was to be left unoffered till a reconciliation was sought.

It is not merely with the brother who has given us cause of offense, but the brother who, however unreasonably, deems himself hurt by us, that we are commanded to seek reconciliation before we can approach a Heavenly Father.

A band of men and women thus trained in the school of Jesus, careful to look on their own faults, refraining from judging those of others, unselfish and lowly, seeking only to do and to serve, so perfected in a divine love that the most bitter and cruel personal injuries could not move to bitterness or revenge — such a church is in a fit state to administer discipline. It has the Holy Spirit of Jesus with it; and it may be said, without superstitious credulity, of a church in that spirit that its decisions will be so in accordance with the will of God that "whosesoever sins they remit are remitted, and whosesoever sins they retain are retained."

But where have we such a church?

The church of the Master was one of those beautiful ideals, fair as the frost-crystals or the dew-drops of morning. It required a present Jesus to hold it, and then with what constant watchfulness and care and admonition on his part was it kept! We can only study at his marvelous training, and gather some humble inspiration. It was this church of Jesus, the Master, this tried, sifted, suffering body of faithful men and women whose prayers brought down the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, and inaugurated the Apostolic Church.

XXI

JUDAS

It is one of the mysteries in the life of our Lord that he was led by the immediate direction of the Father to incorporate into his little family, and to bring into the closest personal relations with himself, an unsympathetic and adverse element that must have been a source of continual pain to him.

It was after a whole night spent in prayer for the divine direction that the first twelve Apostles were chosen; and Judas also was one of them. The history of this man is a wonder and a warning. That there could possibly be a human being who could have such advantages, could rise to such a height of spiritual power and joy, and yet in the end prove to be utterly without any true spiritual life seems fearful.

It would appear that Judas had at first a sort of worldly enthusiasm for Christ and his kingdom; that he received the divine gift of miracle-working; that he went forth preaching and healing, and felt all the exultation and joy

which the sense of spiritual power and influence gives. Judas was among those who returned from the first missionary tour in triumph, saying, "Lord, even the devils were subject unto us!" The grave answer of Jesus reminded them that it was of far more importance to be really accepted of God as true Christians than to have the most brilliant gifts and powers.

In our Lord's first Sermon on the Mount, which may be considered as an ordaining charge to his Apostles, he had said to them that in the great final day of Judgment there would be many who would say unto him, "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I say to them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Everywhere in the New Testament these miraculous powers are spoken of as something of far less value than the true Christian spirit, and, if we may trust the word of our Master, many had them whom he will never acknowledge for his own.

But the warning fell on the ear of Judas unheeded. Perhaps he did not himself know how selfish and self-seeking was his zeal for the coming kingdom. Generally speaking, the first person deceived by a man who plays a false part is himself. Judas appears not to have excited the suspicions of the little company of brethren. His shrewdness and tact in managing financial matters led them to appoint him the treasurer of the common family purse. Without doubt, what he saw of the enthusiastic love which Jesus excited, the ease with which he could make people willing to lay their fortunes at his feet, opened to his view dazzling golden visions. He saw himself treasurer of a kingdom unequaled in splendor and riches, when all the kingdoms of the world should be subject to his master. It was more than the reign of Solomon, when gold was to be as the stones of the street.

If we notice our Lord's teachings delivered in the hearing of Judas, we must be struck with the explicit and forcible manner in which he constantly pointed out the danger of the worldly spirit which was growing upon that disciple. How solemn the picture of the rich man, absorbed in plans and calculations how to bestow his great wealth until God says to him, "Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee — then whose shall those things be that thou hast provided?" "So," he adds, "is every one that layeth up riches, and is not rich towards God." Again, he tells them that it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. He asks them, What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?

We hear nothing of any replies that Judas makes to these teachings. He seldom is represented dramatically. Peter, James, John, and Thomas, all present themselves vividly to our mind by the things that they say; but Judas is silent. The Master, who knew him so well, did not expose him to the others. He did not lessen their brotherly regard or interrupt the peace of his little family by any effort at expulsion. As his Father had chosen this member to be in intimate nearness to himself, Jesus accepted him, bore with him, loved him, and treated him to the last with the same unvarying sweetness that he showed to the more congenial natures. It is affecting to remember that the very act by which Christ was betrayed was one that showed that all the external habits of affection remained still unbroken between him and the traitor. The kiss of Jesus was sincere; he loved this wretched man as heavenly beings love, and followed him with love to the last.

It would seem that towards the last part of the life of Jesus the moral antagonism between himself and Judas grew more pronounced and intense.

As the spiritual life of Jesus waxed brighter and stronger, so much the more vivid became the contrast between it and the worldly aims of the traitor. Judas saw the kind of worldly prosperity to which he had aspired receding. He saw that Jesus, instead of using his splendid miraculous powers to draw towards him the chiefs of his nation, was becoming every day more in antagonism with them. Instead of meeting the popular desire to make him a king he had drawn back from it, and by that very act lost many followers. His extreme spiritual teachings had disgusted many of his disciples and led them to go back and walk no more with him. And now the talk of Jesus was more and more of persecutions and sufferings and death, as lying just before him. To a worldly eye all this looked like a fanatical throwing away of the very brightest opportunity for fame and fortune and dominion that ever was given to a leader. Judas became sullenly discontented, not yet ready openly to throw off all hopes of what might be got by adhering to his Master, but yet in a critical and fault-finding spirit surveying all his actions.

It is an awful thought that it was possible for a man to share the daily bread of Jesus, to be in his family, treated as a beloved child, to hear all his beautiful words, to listen to his prayers day after day, and yet, instead of melting, to grow colder and harder — to grow more earthly as his Master grew more heavenly, and to find this want of sympathy slowly hardening into a sullen enmity which only waited its hour to declare itself openly. Christ said to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye have both seen and hated both Me and my Father." Judas was fast preparing to join that party.

According to the narrative of St. Matthew, it was after this rebuke in the matter of Mary that Judas went into negotiations with those who were plotting the destruction of Jesus. He was a disappointed man. He had joined

a party which he confidently expected to lead to triumph, success, and wealth. Instead of this, Jesus had lost every opportunity, lost the favorable hour of popularity, and concentrated on himself the hatred of the most powerful men of the nation, and now was talking only of defeat and rejection.

The presence of Judas with the household was now that of a spy, watching his occasion, but making no outward demonstration. He was in the little family circle that gathered in the upper room to eat the last passover supper. His Master bent at his feet and washed them, as he did those of the faithful ones, in that sacramental action when he showed them what he meant by true love. It was directly after this last act of affection that Jesus openly declared his knowledge of the meditated treachery, for he said: "I speak not of you all, I know whom I have chosen; but the Scripture must be fulfilled which saith, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me." Then with a deep sigh he adds in plain words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, one of *you* shall betray me."

It is a most lovely comment on the goodness of heart of these simple men that in so solemn a moment no one of them thought of criminating the other. Each one said tremblingly, "Lord, is it I?"

John, leaning down on his Master's breast, inquired privately who it was; and Jesus gave him a private sign that it should be he to whom he gave a sop when he had dipped it. He dipped the sop, and gave it to Judas. Then Judas, still keeping up the show of innocence, said, like the rest, "Master, is it I?" Jesus answered, "Thou hast said it."

It is said that "Satan entered into him" at this moment. All the smouldering elements of meanness, disgust, dislike of Jesus, his teaching, his spirit, and his mission were quickened by the presence of that invisible enemy who

comes to the heart of man only when he is *called* by the congenial indulgence of wicked passions.

Judas rose hastily, and our Lord added, "That thou doest, do quickly." He flung himself out and was gone.

The miserable sum for which he sold his Master, though inconsiderable in itself, was probably offered as first wages in a new service. His new masters were the heads of Israel: all avenues of patronage and power were in their hands, and the fortune that he could not make on the side of Jesus he might hope to gather on that of his enemies. He may have compounded with his conscience by believing that the miraculous power of our Lord was such that there was no danger of a fatal termination. In fact, that his being taken might force him to declare himself and bring on the triumphant moment of victory. He might possibly have said to himself that he was at any rate acting the part of a mediator in bringing matters to a crisis, and perhaps forcing a favorable result. For, when he found that Jesus was indeed a victim, he was overwhelmed with remorse and despair. He threw the wretched money at the feet of his tempters and departed and hanged himself, and went, as we are told, "to his own place."

He went to the place for which *he* had fitted himself, who, living in the very bosom of Jesus, had grown more and more unlike him every day. He left Christ — driven by no force but his own wicked will. To the last the love of God pursued him: his Master knelt and washed the very feet that were so soon to hasten to betray him. It was with a sorrowful spirit, a troubled heart, that Jesus said, "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed: good were it for that man if he never had been born."

Without attempting to solve the mysteries of this deepest of all tragedies, we may yet see some of the uses and purposes of it in regard to ourselves.

Our Lord was appointed to suffer in all respects as his brethren; and the suffering of bearing with antagonistic and uncongenial natures is one that the providence of God often imposes on us. There are often bound to us, in the closest intimacy of social or family ties, natures hard and ungenial, with whom sympathy is impossible, and whose daily presence necessitates a constant conflict with an adverse influence. There are, too, enemies — open or secret — whose enmity we may feel yet cannot define. Our Lord, going before us in this hard way, showed us how we should walk.

It will be appropriate to the solemn self-examination of the period of Lent to ask ourselves, Is there any false friend or covert enemy whom we must learn to tolerate, to forbear with, to pity and forgive? Can we in silent offices of love wash their feet as our Master washed the feet of Judas? And if we have no real enemies, are there any bound to us in the relations of life whose habits and ways are annoying and distasteful to us? Can we bear with them in love? Can we avoid harsh judgments, and harsh speech, and the making known to others our annoyance? Could we through storms of obloquy and evil report keep calmly on in duty, unruffled in love, and commending ourselves to the judgment of God? The examination will probably teach us to feel the infinite distance between us and our divine Ideal, and change censoriousness of others into prayer for ourselves.

XXII

GOING UP TO JERUSALEM

Palm Sunday

NOTHING in ancient or modern tragedy is so sublime and touching as the simple account given by the Evangelists of the last week of our Lord's earthly life.

The church has since his ascension so devoutly looked upon him as God that we are in danger of losing the pathos and the power which come from a consideration of his humanity. The Apostle tells us that, in order that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, he was made in all respects like unto his brethren. He was a Jew. His national and patriotic feeling was intense. To him the sacred nation, the temple service, with all its hymns and prayers and ancient poetic recollections, were more dear than to any other man of his nation. The nation was his own, his peculiar, chosen people; he was their head and flower, for whom the whole gorgeous ritual had been appointed, for whom the nation had been for centuries waiting. Apart from his general tenderness and love for humanity was this special love of country and countrymen. Then there was the love of his very own — the little church of tried, true, tested friends who had devoted themselves to him; and, still within that, his family circle, for whom his love was strong as a father's, tender and thoughtful as a mother's. And yet Jesus went through life bearing in his bosom the bitter thought that his nation would reject him and instigate one of his own friends to betray him, and that all seeming success and glory was to end in a cruel and shameful death. He foresaw how every heart that loved him would be overwhelmed and crushed with a misery beyond all human precedent.

It is affecting to read in the Evangelists how often and how earnestly Jesus tried to make his disciples realize what was coming. "Let this saying sink down into your ears," he would say: "the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men;" and then would recount, item by item, the overthrow, the agonies, the insults, the torture, that were to be the end of his loving and gentle mission. At various times and in various forms he took them aside and repeated this prophecy. And it is said that they "understood not his word;" that "they were astonished;" that they "feared to ask him;" that they "questioned one with another what this should mean." It seems probable that, warmed with the flush of present and increasing prosperity and popularity, witnessing his victorious miracles, they had thrown this dark prophecy by, as something inexplicable and never literally to be accomplished. What it could mean they knew not, but that it could have a literal fulfillment they seem none of them to have even dreamed. Perhaps they were like many of us, in our religion, in the habit of looking only on the bright, hopeful, and easily comprehensible side of things, and letting all that is dark and mysterious slide from the mind.

Up to the very week before his crucifixion the power and popularity of Jesus seemed constantly increasing. His miracles were more open, more impressive, more effective. The raising of Lazarus from the dead had set the final crown on the glorious work. It would appear that Lazarus was a member of a well-known, influential family, moving in the higher circles of Jerusalem. It was a miracle wrought in the very heart and centre of knowledge and influence, and it raised the fame of the new prophet to the summit of glory. It is an affecting comment on the worth of popular favor that the very flood-tide of the fame and glory of Jesus was just five days before he was crucified. On Monday — the day now celebrated in the

Christian Church as Palm Sunday — he entered Jerusalem in triumph, with palms waving, and garlands thrown at his feet, and the multitudes going before and after, shouting Hosanna to the Son of David; and on Friday of the same week the whole multitude shouted, "Away with him! Crucify him! Release unto us Barabbas! His blood be upon us and upon our children!" and he was led through those same streets to Calvary. On these six days before the death of Jesus the historians have expended a wealth of detail, so that the record of what is said and done is more than that of all the other portions of that short life.

There are many touches of singular tenderness conveyed in very brief words. Speaking of his final journey from Galilee to Judæa, says one: "When the time came that he should be received up he set his face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem." Another narrates that when he was going up to Jerusalem he walked before his disciples, and as they followed him they were afraid. Evidently he was wrapped in an electric cloud of emotion; he was swept along by a mighty influence — tides of feeling deeper than they could comprehend were rolling in his soul, and there was that atmosphere of silence and mystery about him by which the inward power of great souls casts an outward sphere of awe about them. Still, as they walked behind, they had their political dreams of a coming reign of power and splendor, when the Judæan nation should rule the world, and they, as nearest to the Master, should administer the government of the nation — for it is said, by the way they "disputed who should be the greatest."

He hears their talk, as a dying mother, who knows that a few hours will leave her children orphans, listens to the contentions of the nursery. He turns to them and makes a last effort to enlighten them — to let them know that not earthly glory and a kingdom are before them, but

cruelty, rejection, shame, and death. He recounts the future, circumstantially, and with what deep energy and solemn pathos of voice and manner may be imagined. They make no answer, but shrink back, look one on another, and are afraid to ask more. It would seem, however, that there was *one* in the band on whom these words made an impression. Judas evidently thought that, if this was to be the end of all, he had been taken in and deceived: a sudden feeling of irritation arises against One who having such evident and splendid miraculous power is about to give up in this way and lose his opportunity and suffer himself to be defeated. Judas is all ready now to make the best terms for himself with the winning party. The others follow in fear and trembling. The strife who shall be greatest subsides into a sort of anxious questioning.

They arrive at a friendly house where they are to spend the Sabbath, the last Sabbath of his earthly life. There was a feast made for him, and we see him surrounded by grateful friends. By the fact that Martha waited on the guests and that Lazarus sat at the table it would appear that this feast was in the house of a relative of that family. It is said to have occurred in the house of "Simon the Leper" — perhaps the leper to whom Jesus said, "I will — be thou clean."

Here Mary, with the abandon which marks her earnest and poetic nature, breaks a costly vase of balm and sheds the perfume on the head of her Lord. It was an action in which she offered up her whole self — her heart and her life — to be spent for him, like that fleeting perfume. Judas expostulates, "To what purpose is this waste?" There is an answering flash from Jesus, like lightning from a summer cloud. The value that our Lord sets upon love is nowhere more energetically expressed. This trembling, sensitive heart has offered itself up wholly to him,

and he accepts and defends it. There is a touch of human pathos in the words, "She is anointing me for my burial." Her gift had all the sacredness in his eyes of a death-bed act of tenderness, and he declares, "Wheresoever through the world this gospel shall be preached, there also shall what this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

Judas slinks back, sullen and silent. The gulf between him and his Master grows hourly more palpable — as the nature that cannot love and the nature to whom love is all come in close collision. Judas and Christ cannot blend any more than oil and water, and the nearer approach only makes the conflict of nature more evident.

On Monday morning, the day that we now celebrate as Palm Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem. We are told that the great city, now full of Jews come up from all parts of the world, was moved about him. We have in the Book of Acts an enumeration of the varieties in the throng that filled Jerusalem at this time: "Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia and in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians." When all these strangers heard the shouting, it is said the "whole city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth in Galilee."

And what was He thinking of, as he came thus for the last time to the chosen city? We are told "And when he drew near and beheld the city, he wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Then follows the prophetic vision of the destruction of Jerusalem — scenes of horror and despair for which his gentle spirit bled inwardly.

One feature of the picture is touching: the children in the temple crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The love of Jesus for children is something marked and touching. When he rested from his labors at eventide, it was often, we are told, with a little child in his arms — children were his favorite image for the heavenly life, and he had bid the mothers to bring them to him as emblems of the better world. The children were enthusiastic for him, they broke forth into rapture at his coming as birds in the sunshine, loud and noisily as children will, to the great discomfiture of priests and Scribes. "Master! bid them hush," they said. He turned, indignant — "If these should hold their peace the very stones would cry out." These evidences of love from dear little children were the last flower thrown at the feet of Jesus on his path to death. From that day the way to the cross was darker every hour.

XXIII

THE BARREN FIG-TREE

Monday in Passion Week

During the last week of the life of Jesus we see him under the most awful pressure of emotion; the crisis of a great tragedy, which has been slowly gathering and growing from the beginning of the world, is now drawing on. The nation that he had chosen — that he had borne and carried through all the days of old — was now to consummate her ruin in his rejection. All his words and actions during the last week of his life were under the shadow of that cloud of doom which overhung the city of Jerusalem, the temple, and the people whom he had loved, so earnestly and so long, in vain.

When going up to Jerusalem he walked before his disciples, silent and absorbed; and they dared scarcely speak to him. Amid the triumphant shouts of the people that

welcomed him to the city he paused on the verge of Olivet and wept over it. He saw the siege, the famine, the terror of women and helpless children, the misery and despair, the unutterable agonies of the sacking of Jerusalem, which has been a world's wonder; and he broke forth in lamentation. "Oh, that thou hadst known — even thou in this thy day — the things that belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes."

All his discourses of this last week are shaded with the sad coloring and prophetic vision of coming doom, of a crime hastening to fulfillment that should bring a long-delayed weight of wrath and vengeance.

His parables now turn on this theme. One day they tell of a husbandman intrusting a vineyard to the care of faithless servants; he sends messengers to overlook them; they beat one and stone another, till finally he sends his only and beloved son, and then they say, "Let us kill him;" and they catch him and cast him out of the vineyard and slay him. "What," he asks, "shall the Lord of the vineyard do to these husbandmen?" Again, he speaks of a feast to which all are generously invited, and all neglect or reject the invitation, and not only reject but insult and despise and ill-treat the messengers who bear the invitation; and tells how the insulted King sends the invitation to others, and decrees, "None of these men shall taste of my supper." He tells of a wedding feast, and of foolish virgins who slumber with unfilled lamps till the door of welcome is shut. He tells of a king, who, having intrusted talents to his servants, comes again to reckon, and takes away the talent of the unfaithful one and casts him to outer darkness.

All these themes speak of the approaching rejection of the nation on whom God has heaped so many favors for many years. The thought of their doom seems to press down the heart of the Redeemer.

The twenty-third chapter of Matthew contains Christ's last sermon in the temple — his final words of leave-taking of his people; and a most dreadful passage it is. It is awful, it is pathetic, to compare those fearful words with his first benignant announcement at Nazareth. Nothing in human language can be conceived more terrible than these last denunciations of the rejected Lord and Lover of the chosen race. He exposes with scathing severity the hypocrisy, the greed, the cruelty of the leaders of the nation; he denounces them as the true descendants of those who of old killed God's prophets and stoned his messengers, and ends by rising into the very majesty of the Godhead in declaring their final doom: —

"Fill ye up the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents! Ye generation of vipers! How can ye escape the damnation of hell? Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets and wise men and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city. That upon you might come all the righteous blood shed upon earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias,[1] the son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Verily I say unto you all these shall come upon this generation!

"O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets and stonest those that are sent unto thee — how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings — and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate, for I say that ye shall see me no more henceforth till ye say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

1 See 2 Chronicles xxiv. 20, 21.

"And the spirit of the Lord came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoida the priest, who stood among the people, and said, Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord, that ye cannot prosper? Because ye have forsaken the Lord he also hath forsaken you. And they conspired against him and stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the Lord."

These two instances, of Abel and Zacharias, cited by our Lord from the very first and very last of the sacred historic books, seemed to cover the whole ground of their history. The variation as to the name of the prophet's father has many theories to account for it, any one of which is satisfactory.

This was Christ's last farewell — his valedictory to those whom he had loved and labored for, and who would not come to him that he might give them life.

To all these awful words was added the language of an awful symbol. In one of his parables our Lord had spoken of the Jewish nation under the figure of a tree which, though carefully tended year by year, bore no fruit. At last the word goes forth, "Cut it down!" But the keeper of the vineyard intercedes and prays that it may have a longer space of cultured care, and so be brought to fruit-bearing. This last week of our Lord's life he sets forth the solemn close of that parable by one of those symbolic acts common among the old prophets and well understood by the Jews.

Approaching a fair and promising tree on his way into the city, he seeks fruit thereon, but finds it barren. There is a pause, and then a voice of deep sadness says, "No fruit grow on thee henceforth and forever!" and immediately the fig-tree withered away.

It was an outward symbol of that doomed city whose day of mercy was past. The awfulness of these last words and of this last significant sign is increased by the tenderness of Him who gave them forth. It is the Fountain of Pity, the All-Loving One, that uttered the doom — a doom made certain and inevitable not by God's will but by man's perversity.

The lesson that we have to learn is the reality and awfulness of sin, the reality of that persistence in wickedness that can make even the love of Jesus vain for our salvation. For what hope, what help, what salvation can there be for those who cannot be reached by His love? If they have seen and hated both him and his Father — what remains?

XXIV

CAIAPHAS

Tuesday in Passion Week

THE thought may arise to many minds, if Jesus was so lovely, so attractive, and so beloved, how could it have been possible that he should be put to so cruel a death in the very midst of a people whom he loved and for whom he labored?

The sacred record shows us why. It was this very attractiveness, this very power over men's hearts, that was the cause and reason of the conspiracy against Jesus. We have a brief and very dramatic account of the meeting of the Sanhedrim in which the death of Christ was finally resolved upon, and we find that very popularity urged as a reason why he cannot be permitted to live. In John xi. 47, we are told that after the raising of Lazarus the chief priests and Pharisees gathered a council and said, "What do we? this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away our place and nation."

There is the case stated plainly, and we see that these men talked then just as men in our days talk. Do they ever resolve on an act of oppression or cruelty, calling it by its right name? Never. It is a "sacrifice" to some virtue; and the virtue in this case was patriotism.

Here is the Jewish nation, a proud and once powerful people, crushed and writhing under the heel of the conquering Romans. They are burning with hatred of their oppressors and with a desire of revenge, longing for the Messiah that shall lead them to conquest and make their nation the head of the world.

And now, here comes this Jesus and professes to be the

long-promised leader; and what does he teach? Love and forgiveness of enemies; patient endurance of oppression and wrong; and supreme devotion to the pure inner life of the soul. If Roman tax-gatherers distrain upon their property and force them to carry it from place to place, they are to meet it only by free good will, that is, willingness to go two miles when one is asked. If the extortionate officer seizes their coat, they are to show only a kindliness that is willing to give even more than that.

They are to love their bitterest enemies, pity and pray for them, and continue in unbroken kindness, even as God's sunshine falls in unmoved benignity on the just and the unjust!

It must have inflamed these haughty, ambitious leaders to fury to see all their brilliant visions of war and conquest and national independence melting away in a mist of what seemed to them the mere impossible sentimentalism of love. And yet this illusion gains ground daily; Christ is received in triumph at Jerusalem, and the rulers say to each other, "Perceive ye how we prevail nothing? behold the whole world is gone out after him."

Now, in the Jewish Sanhedrim Christ had friends and followers. We are told of Joseph of Arimathea, who would not consent to the deeds of the council. We are told of Nicodemus, who before now had spoken boldly in the council, demanding justice and a fair hearing for Jesus. We may well believe that so extreme a course as was now proposed met at first strong opposition. There seems to have been some warm discussion. We may imagine what it was: that Jesus was a just and noble man, a prophet, a man all of whose deeds and words had been pure and beneficent, was doubtless earnestly urged. The advocates, it is true, were not men who had left all to follow him, or enrolled themselves openly as his disciples, but yet they could not consent to so monstrous an

injustice as this. That the discussion produced strong feeling is evident from the excited manner in which Caiaphas sums up: "Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is better that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish." That was the case as he viewed it, and he talked precisely as men in our days have often talked when consenting to an injustice or oppression: Say what you will of this Jesus; I will not dispute you. Admit, if you please, his virtues and good works; still, he is a wrong-headed man, that will be the ruin of our nation. Either he must perish or the nation be destroyed.

And so, on the altar of patriotism this murder was laid as a sacrifice. And it was this same burning, impatient national spirit of independence that slew Christ which afterwards provoked the Roman government beyond endurance, and brought upon Jerusalem wrath to the uttermost.

The very children and grandchildren of Caiaphas died in untold miseries in that day of wrath and doom. The decision to reject Christ was the decision which destroyed Jerusalem with a destruction more awful than any other recorded in history.

We are apt to consider the actors in this great tragedy as sinners above all others. But every day and every hour in our times just such deeds are being reënacted.

There were all sorts of sinners in that tragedy: Caiaphas, who sacrificed one whom he knew to be a noble and good man to political ambition; Pilate, who consented to an acknowledged wrong from dread of personal inconvenience; Judas, who made the best of his time in selling out a falling cause to the newcomers; Peter, the impetuous friend suddenly frightened into denial; the twelve, forsaking and fleeing in a moment of weakness; the multitude of careless spectators, those tide-waiters who turn as the flood turns, who shouted for Jesus yesterday because others were shouting, and turn against him to-day because

he is unpopular. All these were there. On the other hand, there were the faithful company of true-hearted women that went with Jesus weeping on his way to the cross; that beloved disciple and the Mother that stood by him to the last; all these, both friends and foes, represent classes of people who still live and still act their part in this our day.

"For, when under fierce oppression,
Goodness suffers like transgression,
Christ again is crucified;
But if love be there true-hearted,
By no pain or terror parted,
Mary stands the cross beside!"

XXV

THE JOY OF CHRIST

Wednesday in Passion Week

THE last chapters of St. John — in particular from the thirteenth to the seventeenth — are worthy, more than anything else in the sacred writings, of the designation which has been given them, The Heart of Jesus. They are the language of the most intimate love, to the most intimate friends, in view of the greatest and most inconceivable of human sorrows. For, though the disciples — poor, humble, simple men — were dazed, confused, and misty up to the very moment when they were entering upon the greatest sorrow of their life, the Master who was leading them saw it all with perfect clearness. He saw perfectly not only the unspeakable humiliation and anguish that were before himself, but the disappointment, the terror, the dismay, the utter darkness and despair that were just before these humble, simple friends who had invested all their love and hope in him.

When we think of this it will seem all the more strange, the more unworldly and divine to find that in these very chapters our Lord speaks more often, and with more emphasis, of JOY than in any other part of the New Testament. In the fifteenth he says, "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." And again, in his prayer for them, he says, "And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." He speaks of his joy as a treasure he longed to impart — as something which overflowed his own soul, and sought to equalize itself by flowing into the souls of his friends. He was not only full of joy, but he had fullness of joy to give away.

This joy of Christ in the approach of extremest earthly anguish and sorrow is one of the beautiful mysteries of our faith. It is a holy night-flower, opening only in darkness, and shedding in the very shadow of death light and perfume; or like the solemn splendor of the stars, to be seen only in the deepest darkness.

In the representations made of our Lord as a man of sorrows we are too apt to forget the solemn emphasis with which he asserts this fullness of joy. But let us look at his position on the mere human side. At the hour when he thus spoke he knew that, so far as the salvation of his nation was concerned, his life-work had been a failure. His own people had rejected him and had bargained with a member of his own family to betray him. He knew the exact details of the scourging, the scoffing, the taunts, the torture, the crucifixion; and to a sensitive soul the hour of approach to a great untried agony is often the hour of bitterest trial. It is when we foresee a great trouble in the dimness of to-morrow that our undisciplined hearts grow faint and fail us. But he who had long foreseen — who had counted in advance — every humiliation,

every sorrow, and every pain, spoke at the same time of his joy as an overflowing fullness. He spoke of his peace as something which he had a divine power to give away. The world saw that night a new sight — a sufferer who had touched the extreme of all earthly loss and sorrow, who yet stood, like a God, offering to give Peace and Joy — even fullness of joy. For our Lord intensifies the idea. He wants his children not to have joy merely, but to be full of joy. This is the meaning of the words to "have my joy fulfilled in them."

We shall see in the affecting history of the next few hours of the life of Jesus that this heavenly joy was capable of a temporary obscuration. He was aware that a trial was coming from a direct collision with the Evil Spirit. "The Prince of this world cometh, but hath nothing in me."

Yet we cannot but feel that the mysterious agonies of Gethsemane, that wrung the blood-drops from his heart, were in part due to that conflict with cruel and malignant spirits. It is the greatest possible help to our poor sorrowful nature that these struggles, these strong cryings and bitter tears of our Lord, have been recorded, because it helps us to feel that he was not peaceful because he was passionless — that his joy and peace did not come from the serenity of a nature incapable of sorrow and struggles like ours. There are passages in the experience of such saints as Madame Guyon that seem like the unnatural exaltations of souls exceptionally indifferent to circumstances; nothing makes any difference to them; one thing is just as good as another. But in the experience of Jesus we see our own most shrinking human repellencies. We see that there were sufferings that he dreaded with his whole soul; sorrows which he felt to be beyond even his power of endurance; and so when he said, "Not my will, but Thy will," he said it with full vision of what he was accepting;

and in that unshaken, that immovable oneness of will with the Father lay the secret of his joy and victory.

It is a great and solemn thing for us to think of this joy of Christ in sorrow. It is something that we can know only in and by sorrow. But sorrows are so many in this world of ours! Griefs, sickness, disappointment, want, death, so beset our footsteps that it is worth everything to us to think of that joy of Christ that is brightest as the hour grows darkest. It is a gift. It is not in us. We cannot get it by any human reasonings or the mere exercise of human will, but we can get it as a free gift from Jesus Christ.

If in the hour of his deepest humiliation and suffering he had joy and peace to give away, how much more now, when he is exalted at the right hand of God, to give gifts unto men! Poor sorrowful, suffering, struggling souls, Christ longs to comfort you. "I will give to him that is athirst the water of life freely." "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

XXVI

GETHSEMANE

Thursday in Passion Week

THERE are times in life when human beings are called to sorrows that seem so hopeless, so cruel, that they take from the spirit all power of endurance. There are agonies that overwhelm, that crush, — their only language seems to be a groan of prostrate anguish. There are distresses against which the heart cries out, "It is too much. I cannot, cannot bear it. God have mercy on me!"

It was for people who suffer thus, for those who are capable of such depths and who are called to go through

them, that the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession passed through that baptism of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Apostle says, "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons and daughters unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." And it was at this hour and time that he was to pass through such depths that no child of his could ever go deeper. Alone, and without the possibility of human sympathy, he was to test those uttermost distresses possible to the most exceptional natures. Jesus suffered *all* that he could endure and live. The record is given with great particularity by three Evangelists, and is full of mysterious suggestion. Up to this period all the discourses of our Lord, in distinct view of his final sufferings, had been full of calmness and courage. He had consoled his little flock, and bid them not be troubled, speaking cheerfully of a joy that should repay the brief anguish of separation. He not only was wholly at peace in his own soul, but felt that he had peace in abundance to give away. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Yet he went forth from speaking these very words, and this is the account of the scene that followed, collated from the three Evangelists: —

"Then cometh Jesus with them unto the place that is called Gethsemane, and said to his disciples, Sit ye here while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy (in extreme anguish). And he said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; tarry ye here and watch with me, and pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he went forward a little, and fell on his face and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him, saying, My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I

will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto his disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, and said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt. O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy, neither wist they what to answer him. And he left them and went away the third time, and prayed, saying the same words. And, being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground, and there appeared to him an angel from heaven strengthening him.

"And when he rose up from prayer and was come to his disciples, he findeth them sleeping for sorrow, and saith unto them, Sleep on now — rest."

There seems here evidence that the anguish, whatever it was, had passed, and that Jesus had returned to his habitual peace. He looks with pity on the poor tired followers whose sympathy had failed him just when he most needed it, and says, "Poor souls, let them sleep for a little and rest."

After an interval he rouses them. "It is enough — the hour is come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hand of sinners. Rise up; let us go: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me."

The supposition that it was the final agony of the cross which Jesus prayed to be delivered from is inconsistent with his whole life and character. He had kept that end in view from the beginning of his life. He said, in view of it, "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" He rebuked Peter in the sharpest terms for suggesting that he should avoid those predicted sufferings. Going up to Jerusalem to die, he walked before the rest, as if impelled by a sacred ardor to

fulfill his mission. Furthermore, in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are taught thus: the writer says, speaking of the Saviour, "Who in the days of his flesh offered up prayers with strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him from death, and *was heard* in that he feared." Whatever relief it was that our Lord supplicated with such earnestness, it was given; and he went forth from the dreadful anguish in renewed and perfect peace.

We may not measure the depths of that anguish or its causes. Our Lord gives some intimation of one feature in it by saying, as he prepared to go forth to it, "The Prince of this World cometh, and hath nothing in me;" and in warning his disciples, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." The expression employed by St. Mark to describe the anguish is indicative of a sudden rush — of an amazement, as if a new possibility of suffering, overwhelming and terrible, had been disclosed to him, such a sorrow as it seemed must destroy life — "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death."

Let these words remain in all their depths, in all their mystery, as standing for that infinite possibility of pain which the one divine Man was to taste for every man. There have been facts in human experience analogous. We are told that the night before his execution, Jerome of Prague, in his lonely prison, condemned and held accursed by the proud Scribes and Pharisees, the Christian Sanhedrim of his times, fainted and groaned and prayed as Jesus in Gethsemane. Martin Luther has left on record a wonderful prayer, written the night before the Diet of Worms, when he, a poor, simple monk, was called before the great Diet of the Empire to answer for his faith. Such strong crying and tears — such throbbing words — that seem literally like drops of blood falling down to the ground, attest that Luther was passing through Gethsemane. Alone, with all the visible power of the Church

and the world against him, his position was like that of Jesus. A crisis was coming when he was to witness for truth, and he felt that only God was for him, and he appeals to him: "Hast thou not chosen me to do this work? I ask thee, O God, O thou my God, where art thou? Art thou dead? No, thou canst not die; thou art only hiding thyself."

In many private histories there are Gethsemanes. There are visitations of sudden, overpowering, ghastly troubles, — troubles that transcend all ordinary human sympathy, such as the helpless human soul has to wrestle with alone. And it was because in this blind struggle of life such crushing experiences are to be meted out to the children of men that Infinite Love provided us with a divine Friend who had been through the deepest of them all, and come out victorious.

In the sudden wrenches which come by the entrance of death into our family circles, there is often an inexplicable depth of misery that words cannot tell. No outer words can tell what a trial is to the soul. Only Jesus, who, as the Head of the human race, united in himself every capability of human suffering, and proved them all, in order that he might help us, only he has an arm strong enough and a voice tender enough to reach us. The stupor of the disciples in the agony of Jesus is a sort of parable or symbol of the inevitable *loneliness* of the deepest kind of sorrow. There are friends, loving, honest, true, but they cannot watch with us through such hours. It is like the hour of death — nobody can go with us. But he who knows what it is so to suffer; he who has felt the horror, the amazement, the heart-sick dread — who has fallen on his face overcome, and prayed with cryings and tears and the bloody sweat of agony — he can understand us and can help us. He can send an angel from heaven to comfort us when every human comforter is "sleeping for sorrow."

It was Gethsemane which gave Jesus the power to bring many sons and daughters unto glory.

And it may comfort us under such trials to hope that as he thus gained an experience and a tenderness which made him mighty to comfort and to save, so we, in our humbler measure, may become comforters to others. When the experience is long past, when the wounds of the heart are healed, then we may find it good to have drank of Christ's cup, and gone down in that baptism with him. We may find ourselves with hearts tenderer to feel, and stronger to sustain others; even as the Apostle says, he "comforteth us in all our tribulations, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."

XXVII

THE LAST WORDS OF JESUS

Good Friday

A PECULIAR sacredness always attaches to the words of the dying. In that lonely pass between the here and the hereafter the meanest soul becomes in a manner a seer, and a mysterious interest invests it. But the last utterances of great and noble spirits, of minds of vast feeling and depth, are of still deeper significance. The last utterances of great men would form a pathetic collection and a food for deep ponderings. It is no wonder, then, that the traditions of the Christian Church have attached a special value to the last words of Jesus on the cross.

The last words of Socrates, reported by Plato, have had an undying interest. These words were spoken in the bosom of sympathizing friends and in the enjoyment of physical quiet and composure. Death was at hand; but

it was a death painless and easy, and undisturbing to the flow of thought or emotion.

The death of Jesus, on the contrary, was death with every aggravation and horror which could make it fearful. There was everything to torture the senses and to obscure the soul. It was a whirl of vulgar obloquy and abuse, confusing to the spirit, and following upon protracted exhaustion from sleeplessness and suffering of various kinds for long hours.

In the case of most human beings we might wish to hide our eyes from the sight of such an agony; we might refuse to listen to what must be the falterings and the weaknesses of a noble spirit overwhelmed and borne down beyond the power of human endurance. But no such danger attends the listening to the last words on Calvary. They have been collected into a rosary embodying the highest Christian experience possible to humanity, the most signal victory of love over pain and of good over evil that the world's history presents.

During Passion Week in Rome no services are more impressive than those of the seven "last words," with the hymns, prayers, and exhortations accompanying them. To us the mere quotation of them, unattended by sermon or hymn or prayer, is a litany of awful power. Have we ever pondered these as they were spoken in their order in the words of the simple Gospel narrative?

"And when they came to the place that is called Calvary, there they crucified him and the malefactors, the one on his right hand and the other on his left. Then said Jesus, *Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.*" This is the first word. Against physical violence and pain there is in us all a reaction of the animal nature which expresses itself often in the form of irritation. Thus, in strong, undisciplined natures, the first shock of physical torture brings out a curse, and it is only after an

interval that reason and conscience gain the ascendency and make the needed allowance. In these strange words of Jesus we feel that there is the sharp shock of a new sense of pain, but it wrings from him only prayer. This divine sweetness of love was unvanquished; the habit of tenderness and consideration for the faults of others furnished an instant plea. The poor brutal Roman soldiers — they know not what they do! The foolish multitude who three days before shouted "Hosanna," and now shout "Crucify" — they know not what they do! How strange to the Roman soldiers must those words have sounded, if they understood them! "What manner of man is this?" It is not surprising that tradition numbers these poor soldiers among the earliest converts to Jesus.

The second utterance was on this wise: —

"And the people that stood beholding, and the rulers also with them, derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked him, coming to him and offering him vinegar; and one of the malefactors railed on him, saying, If thou be the Son of God, save thyself and us. But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? — and we, indeed, justly, for we receive the reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, *Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*"

Still unvanquished by pain, he is even with his last breath pronouncing words of grace and consolation for the guilty and repentant! He is mighty to save even in his humiliation!

The third utterance is recorded by St. John as follows: —

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus, therefore, saw his mother standing, and

the disciple whom he loved, he said to his mother, *Woman, behold thy son*, and to the disciple, *Son, behold thy mother*."

Thus far, every utterance of Jesus has been one of thoughtful consideration for others, of prayer for his enemies, of grace and pardon to the poor wretch by his side, and of tenderness to his mother and disciple. But in tasting death for every man our Lord was to pass through a deeper experience; he was to know the sufferings of the darkened brain, which, clogged and impeded by the obstructed circulation, no longer afforded a clear medium for divine communion. He was to suffer the eclipse which the animal nature in its dying state can interpose between the soul and God. Three hours we are told had passed, when there was darkness over all the land, like that that was slowly gathering over the head of the suffering Lord. "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani*, which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Those words, from the Psalm of David, come now as the familiar language expressive of that dreadful experience to which the whole world looks as its ransom: —

"After that, Jesus said, *I thirst*. And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar and put it on a reed and gave him to drink. And when he had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished*, and he bowed his head."

What we read of his last utterance is that "he cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost." This last loud utterance was in the words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

It is the interpretation that the church has given to these last words that they betokened a sudden flame of joyful perception, such as sometimes lights up the brain at the dying moment, after it has been darkened by the paralysis of death. As he said, "It is finished," light,

and joy, and hope, flushed his soul, and with this loud cry of victory and joy, it departed like a ray of heavenly light to the bosom of the Father.

Such were the seven "last utterances" of Jesus — and when can we hope to attain to what they teach? When shall *we* be so grounded in Love that no tumult or jar of outward forces, no insults, no physical weariness, exhaustion, or shock of physical pain, shall have power to absorb us in selfishness, or make us forgetful of others? When shall pity and prayer be the only spontaneous movement of our hearts when most hurt and injured — pierced in the tenderest nerve? When shall thoughtfulness for others, and divine pity for degraded natures, be the immovable habit of our souls? How little of *self* and its sufferings in these last words; how much of pity and love — the pity and love of a God!

Could we but learn life's lessons by them, then will come at last to us the final hour, when, *our* trial being completed, we shall say "It is finished," and pass like him to the bosom of the Father.

XXVIII

THE DARKEST HOUR

Good Friday Evening

What is the darkest hour to us when our friends die? Not the dying hour; for then love has some last act, some last word to receive, some comfort to give, some service to render, that diverts from the bitterness of pain. Not even when the eyes are closed forever, and the face is fixed in marble stillness; for still we gather at the side of the cold clay and feel as if there were something left us of our love. But when we have carried our dear ones to the grave, and

seen the doors of the sepulchre shut between them and us, and come back to the house where they are no more — where they never more may be — *then* is indeed the darkest hour.

There is a very touching picture by Delaroche entitled "The Return from the Cross," in which the mother of Jesus, leaning on the arm of the beloved John, is seen just entering a lowly dwelling. A few faithful friends, men and women, are with them; they have seen him die — seen him laid in the sepulchre and a great stone rolled against the door; and now they are come to their desolate home to think it all over, and to weep.

Do we ask, Why did they not remember the words of Jesus, that he should rise again? Ah! because they had just such hearts as we have, and their faith was overpowered by sight just as ours is.

They may have thought they believed that they should see their Lord risen from the dead; but at the sight of the death agonies, and the lifeless form, and the dark, cold stone of the sepulchre, all this poor faith died in darkness. It was like carrying a taper out into a tempest. And we, when we lay our dear ones in the grave, say in solemn words that we do it "in sure and certain hope of a blessed and glorious resurrection," when what is sown in weakness shall be raised in power, what is sown in dishonor shall be raised in glory. We say it, and we think we believe it; but does it really then cheer us? Does it dry our tears? Does it make the return to our desolated home any less dreadful?

Still we remember the death-bed, the pains, the dying eyes, the weakness, the sinking — we are overwhelmed by sorrow, and our souls ache as with a wound. Our hearts throb and yearn towards the form we can no longer see or embrace, as if the loved one were a portion of our own selves that had been violently torn away, leaving us faint-

ing and bleeding to death. All this — more than all this — was in the sorrow of the home of Mary and John that darkest of all nights.

He they mourned was not merely friend, but Lord and Leader, the Hope of Israel; the hope of the world; and God had let him suffer and die thus!

It was true that Jesus had made special efforts to provide against the sinking of this hour. He warned his friends of it beforehand. He admitted four of his chosen disciples upon the Mount of Transfiguration to look into the heavenly world and see him in glory and hear him speaking with Moses and Elijah of his coming death. All this was given that their faith might not fail. Then, just before his death, at the grave of Lazarus, he declared himself the Resurrection and the Life, and showed them in the restored form of a well-known friend what he meant by rising from the dead — for it is said, "They questioned among themselves what the rising from the dead should mean."

But all appeared to be gone now. Love still kept watch. Spices were prepared to embalm the precious form with no hope, apparently, of its resurrection. It had faded out from their minds as it seems to fade out of the minds of us Christians when we bewail our dead and speak of them as "lost." Their Jesus was to them dead and gone; and why this thing was permitted was a dark, insoluble mystery. "We trusted that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel," said the two disciples, sadly walking on the way to Emmaus. "We trusted!" All in the past tense. Not a word of any hope or faith in the resurrection! And yet their Lord and Master was even at that moment walking with them and comforting their hearts.

Surely, in this respect, we modern Christians too often tread in the footsteps of the saints and suffer as they did.

But our Lord knows our weakness; he knows the physical faintness which comes from long watching, the obscuration of mind which comes from sorrow, and he is at hand to comfort us in our blind weeping. Mary Magdalene knew him not, because her eyes were full of tears, till his well-known voice called her name. The mourning disciples as they walked to Emmaus knew not that Jesus was walking by them. And so, ever since, to weary hearts and lonely homes the comforting Christ still comes invisibly, with sweetness and rest, if only we of little faith would remember his promises and recognize his presence. Still now, as he first announced himself, he comes "to heal the broken-hearted," and is beside them ever in the darkest and most dreadful hour of their afflictions.

XXIX

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Easter Sunday

THERE is something wonderfully poetic in the simple history given by the different Evangelists of the resurrection of our Lord. It is like a calm, serene, dewy morning, after a night of thunder and tempest. One of the most beautiful features in the narrative is the presence of those godlike forms of our angel brethren. How can it be possible that critics with human hearts have torn and mangled this sacred picture for the purpose of effacing these celestial forms — so beautiful, so glorious! Is it superstition to believe that there are higher forms of life, intellect, and energy than those of earth; that there are races of superior beings between us and the throne of God, as there are gradations below us of less and lessening power down to the half-vegetable zoöphytes? These angels, with

their power, their purity, their unfading youth, their tender sympathy for man, are a radiant celestial possibility which every heart must long to claim as not only probable but certain.

The history of our Lord from first to last is fragrant with the sympathy and musical with the presence of these shining ones. They announced his coming to the Blessed among Women. They filled the air with songs and rejoicings at the hour of his birth. They ministered to him during his temptations in the wilderness. When repentant sinners thronged about him and Scribes and Pharisees sneered, it was to the sympathy of these invisible ones that he turned, as those whose hearts thrilled with joy over the repenting sinner. In the last mysterious agony at Gethsemane it was an angel that appeared and strengthened him. And now with what godlike energy do they hasten upon their mission to attend their king's awaking!

"And, behold, there was a great earthquake, for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment was white as snow, and for fear of him the keepers did shake and became as dead men."

In another Evangelist we have a scene that preceded this. These devoted women, in whose hearts love outlived both faith and hope, rose while it was yet dark, and set out with their spices and perfumes to go and pay their last tribute of affection and reverence to the dead.

They were under fear of persecution and death; they knew the grave was sealed and watched by those who had slain their Lord, but still they determined to go. There was the inconsiderate hardihood of love in their undertaking, and the artless helplessness of their inquiry, "Who will roll away the stone from the door?" shows the desperation of their enterprise. Yet they could not but

believe that by prayers or tears or offered payment — in some way — that stone should be rolled away.

Arrived on the spot, they saw that the sepulchre was open and empty, and Mary Magdalene, with the impulsive haste and earnestness which marks her character, ran back to the house of John, where were the mother of Jesus, and Peter, and astonished them with the tidings. "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him."

Nothing is said of the Mother in this scene. Probably she was utterly worn out and exhausted by the dreadful scenes of the day before, and incapable of further exertion. But Peter and John started immediately for the sepulchre. Meanwhile, the two other women went into the sepulchre and stood there perplexed, till suddenly they saw a vision of celestial forms, radiant in immortal youth and clothed in white. One said: —

"Be not afraid. I know ye seek Jesus of Nazareth that was crucified. Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here. He is risen as he said. Behold where they laid him. Remember how he spake unto you of this when he was in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

And they remembered his words.

Furthermore, the friendly spirit bids them to go and tell the disciples and Peter that their Master is risen from the dead, and is going before them into Galilee — there shall they see him. And charged with this message the women had fled from the sepulchre just as Peter and John came up.

The delicacies of character are strikingly shown in the brief record. John outruns Peter, stoops down and looks into the sepulchre; but that species of reticence which always appears in him controls him here — he hesitates to enter the sacred place. Now, however, comes Peter, im-

petuous, ardent, determined, and passes right into the tomb.

There is a touch of homelike minuteness in the description of the grave as they found it — no discovery of haste, no sign of confusion, but all in order: the linen grave-clothes lying in one place; the napkin that was about his head not lying with them, but folded together in a place by itself; indicating the perfect calmness and composure with which their Lord had risen — transported with no rapture or surprise, but, in this supreme moment, maintaining the same tranquillity which had ever characterized him.

It is said they saw and believed, though as yet they did not fully understand the saying that he must rise from the dead; and they left the place and ran with the news to the disciples.

But Mary still lingers weeping by the empty tomb — type of too many of us, who forget that our beloved ones have arisen. Through her tears she sees the pitying angels, who ask her as they might often ask us, "Why weepest thou?" She tells her sorrowful story — they have taken away her Lord and she knows not where they have laid him; and yet at this moment Jesus is standing by her, and one word from his voice changes all.

It is not general truth or general belief that our souls need in their anguish; it is one word from Christ to us, it is his voice calling us by name, that makes the darkness light.

We mark throughout this story the sympathetic touches of interest in the angels. They had heard and remembered what Christ said in Galilee, though his people had forgotten it. They had had sympathy for the repentant weeping of Peter, and sent a special message of comfort to him. These elder brethren of the household seem in all things most thoughtful and careful of human feelings;

they breathe around us the spirit of that world where an unloving word or harsh judgment is an impossible conception.

The earlier Christian tradition speaks of our Lord's first visit to his mother. It may be that in that space of time while Peter and John were running to the sepulchre Jesus himself chose to draw near to his mother. To her he gave one of his last dying words, and we cannot but believe that one of his earliest risen messages of hope and blessing was for her. But over an interview so peculiar and so blessed the sacred narrative has deemed it wise to leave the veil of silence.

The time after our Lord's resurrection is one full of mysteries. But few things are told us of that life which he lived on earth. He no longer walked the ways of men as before — no longer lived with his disciples, but only appeared to them from time to time, as he saw that they needed comfort, counsel, or rebuke. We have the beautiful story of the walk to Emmaus. We have accounts of meetings of the disciples with closed doors, for fear of the Jews, when Jesus suddenly appeared in the midst of them, saying, "Peace be unto you!" and showing to them his hands and his side; and it is added, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

We have an account of how he suddenly appeared to them by the Lake of Genesareth, when they had been vainly toiling all night — how he stood on the shore in the dim gray of morning and said, "Children, have ye any meat?" They answered him "No;" and he said, "Cast the net on the right hand and ye shall find." And then John whispers to Peter, "It is the Lord!" and Peter, impetuous to the last, casts himself into the water and swims to the shore. They find a fire prepared, a meal ready for them, and Jesus to bless the bread, — and very sweet and lovely was the interview.

How many such visits and interviews there were — when and with whom — we have no means of knowing, though St. John indicates that there were many other things which Jesus said and did worthy of record besides those of which we are told. We learn from St. Paul that he appeared to more than five hundred of his followers at once — a meeting not described by any of the Evangelists.

It is believed by many Christians that Christ is yet coming to reign visibly upon this earth. That Christ should reign in any one spot or city of this earth, as earthly kings reign, with a court and human forms of administration, is suggestive of grave difficulties. The embarrassments in the way of our Centennial Exhibition this year, the fatigue and disturbance and danger to health and life of such crowds coming and going, might suggest what would be the effect on human society if in any one earthly place the universal object of all human desire were located. But it may be possible that the barrier between the spiritual world and ours will be so far removed that the presence of our Lord and his saints may at times be with us, even as Christ was with the disciples in this interval. It may become a lawful subject of desire and prayer and expectation. It may be in that day that in assemblies of his people Jesus will suddenly stand, saying, "Peace be unto you!" Such appearances could take place in all countries and lands, according to human needs, without deranging human society.

But whether visibly or by the manifestation of his Spirit, let us hasten and look forward to that final second coming of our Master, when the kingdoms of this world shall be the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ.

XXX

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Ascension Day

At length the visible and mortal pilgrimage of our Lord was over, and the time come when he must return to his home in heaven, to the glory with the Father which he had before the world was.

We cannot fail to notice the calmness, brevity, and simplicity with which this crowning act of his life is recorded. He had before told his disciples that it was better for them that his visible presence should be withdrawn from them, and that when ascended to the Father he should be with them as an intimate spiritual presence and power. He now speaks to them of a baptism of the Holy Spirit that they should receive after his ascension, and bids them tarry in Jerusalem till they be endued with this power from on high.

Then the narrative says: "And he led them out as far as Bethany; and he lifted up his hands and blessed them, and while he blessed them he was parted from them and taken up into heaven; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly to heaven, as he went up, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy from the Mount of Olives, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God."

The forty days that Jesus lingered on earth had, it seems, not been in vain. His mourning flock were con-

soled and brought to such a point of implicit faith that the final separation was full of joy.

They were at last convinced that it was better for them that he go to the Father — that an ascended Lord, seated at the right hand of power and shedding down spiritual light and joy, was better than any earthly presence, however dear. Christ, as a living power of inspiration in the soul, was henceforth to be nearer, dearer, more inseparable, more consoling and helpful than the man of Nazareth had ever been.

Let us all with one heart unite in the beautiful prayer of the church for this day: "O God, the King of Glory, who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto thy Kingdom in Heaven, we beseech thee leave us not comfortless; but send to us thy Holy Ghost to comfort and exalt us to that same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before us, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end. Amen."

XXXI

THE HOLY SPIRIT

Whitsuntide

When our Saviour was to go forth on his great mission he spent forty days in prayer; and so now his little church were to spend forty days of waiting and devotion till they should receive the gift from on high. What that gift was we can see in their history. How dark, how confused, how unspiritual their views, how low their faith, how easily upset by the storms of persecution! But when the divine influence came upon them, what a change! What clearness, what insight, what courage, what power! When

brought before kings and rulers they bore joyous testimony; when beaten ignominiously they went out rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his sake.

Do not all ministers of Christ, all Christians to whose keeping his honor and cause is confided, need such a baptism as this, such a new birth in spiritual things? For the gift came not merely on the twelve Apostles, but on the whole company of believers, both men and women. We read the names of the twelve, and then are told that "these all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brethren," — a company of a hundred and twenty persons.

They were united day after day in prayer — their whole souls, with one accord, were lifted heavenward; all earthly scenes and interests were put aside, and the attitude of their minds was one of ardent desire and expectancy.

It was to souls so raised, so enkindled, that at last the glorious gift came — the spiritual power that made every Christian man and woman among them an inspired and convincing witness for Christ. The world witnessed that day a new sight — an invisible spiritual power, before which thousands bowed at the name of that Jesus whom but a few weeks before they had seen crucified. And why have we not such a baptism and such a power? Is our faith what it should be, — our zeal, our devotion? If all Christians were like us, would the world ever be converted to God? Is there a gift of spiritual power and constancy of faith to be had in answer to fervent prayer? and should we not seek it as they did? Of late there have been in Europe and in this country large conventions of Christians of all names and denominations to pray and seek for this gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable them to witness for Christ as these witnessed; it is a most joyful

sign of our times. Let us hope that such prayers may be answered in bringing back to the modern church something of the fervor, the simplicity, the entire devotion that characterized these first Christians. It is not by arguing with skeptics, but by a divine and holy life, that Christians are to convince the world of the truth of our religion. It is "Christ in us, the hope of glory," that is to be the power that shall convert the world.

XXXII

CHRIST'S SECOND LIFE, IN HIS FOLLOWERS

In a moment of profound emotion, when our Lord contemplated the near approach of the last tragedy in his life, he said: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

Accordingly, it was but little more than a month after the scenes of Calvary before Jerusalem was filled with a harvest of men and women who were born into the Christ-life, and were living and acting in his spirit.

At the feast of Pentecost Jerusalem was full of strangers, devout Jews from every nation under heaven, and three thousand in one day bowed at the feet of the Jesus whom they had crucified. The chief priests were enraged and terrified, for everywhere the Apostles of this crucified Jesus, inspired with a supernatural courage, were working miracles and preaching with an energy even more overcoming than that of the Master. Jesus had been among them but as one man; he had come back as twelve men, every one of whom was full of him, working his works and preaching him with overwhelming power.

It is most impressive to read in the Book of Acts how

Peter and John were called before Annas and Caiaphas — the very tribunal before which Jesus so lately stood, the tribunal before which Peter denied him and John stood in trembling silence. Now these same men face high priests and elders with heads erect and flashing eyes, and say: —

"If we be this day examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, be it known unto you that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified and whom God raised from the dead, doth this man stand before you whole. This is the stone which was set at naught of you builders, which has become the head of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other."

We can imagine the dismay of the Sanhedrim when such men and such sermons met them at every corner. The record says that, perceiving the boldness of Peter and John, and knowing that they were unlearned men, they marveled, and took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus!

It is not likely that the high priest had forgotten the recent time when Jesus stood bound before him. Evidently even then his manner had inspired a secret misgiving awe; and here were these disciples now looking and speaking just like him, with the same certainty, the same majesty. It was Jesus of Nazareth returning in his followers. It was a terror to them all. But we are told the word of God grew and prevailed, the converts increased in crowds daily, "a great company of the priests were obedient" to the word. Of course persecution raged. To confess Christ was to lose place, patronage, and daily bread. The Christians, in their new joy, met this by throwing all their worldly possessions into a common stock and apportioning support to each.

There were rich men like Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and many others, and we read of men who sold all they had and laid the money at the Apostles' feet. Thus

those who daily were thrown out of employment for Christ's sake were supported and relieved. A great financial and administrative business grew up out of this state of things, and we are told that there arose a murmuring among the foreign-born Jews that their widows were neglected in the apportionment of aid.

The Jews have been in all ages a trading nation. Palestine was a little country situated in the very heart of the ancient civilized world. It was a centre of emigration. Colonies of Jews, bearing their religion, their synagogue, their national zeal, had foothold and maintained Jewish worship in almost every leading city of Greece and Rome. They were called, according to their country, Greeks or Romans, while as to religion and race they were Jews.

It appears that the proportion of Greek-born Jews among the converts was so great as to warrant the appointment of seven deacons, all of whom bear names which show their Grecian origin. Stephen was evidently a noted man among them. He is described as full of faith and the Holy Ghost. For aught we know, Stephen may have been one of those Greeks who, during the last week of Christ's life in Jerusalem, came to his disciples, saying, "Sir, we would see Jesus." He may have been among the first-fruits of that harvest which Christ then foresaw when he said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." He seems to have been of a nature peculiarly receptive and lovely — a beautiful medium through whom the Christ-spirit could reveal itself. If he had been in Jerusalem at the time of Christ's death, and witnessed the scenes of Calvary, we may well believe what a fervor was enkindled in his soul, and with what zeal he devoted himself to him. His activity was not confined to the temporal ministrations which were committed to him. He is described as "full of faith and power, and doing great miracles." He maintained the cause of Jesus in word as

well as deed. Certain leaders in a Jewish synagogue, of Greek extraction like himself, who still clung to Jewish prejudices, disputed with him, and we are told they were not able to resist the wisdom and power with which he spoke. A tumult was stirred up, and Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrim, and stood in the place where his Master had stood before him. Again, as before, it was the Jewish national pride and bitterness that were arrayed against him. Stephen had shown the glories of that new spiritual kingdom which Christ was bringing in, where there should be neither Jew nor Greek, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ should be all in all. So the accusation was formulated against him: —

"We have heard him say that Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and shall change the customs which Moses delivered unto us."

The High Priest probably felt that now he had got a leading Christian at advantage. He would meet now and expose this sect that threatened to overthrow their country and destroy their venerable religion. He said to Stephen, with a semblance of moderation and justice, "Are these things so?"

There was a pause, in which Stephen seems to have been so filled by the vision of the glory and beauty of the new life which was opening before the world, that he could not speak. It is said: —

"And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel."

Then began that noble speech, evidently the speech of a Greek-born Jew, who had studied the Hebrew history from a different standpoint from the Rabbins. It is clear from the fragment of this address that it was designed to show, even by their past history, that God's dealings with his people had been irrespective of the temple of Jerusalem and the worship there. He dwelt on God's calling of

Abraham, his sojourn in Canaan before he possessed it; of God's suffering the chosen race to sojourn in Egypt; of Moses, born and nurtured in a Gentile court, and educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians. This man, who lived to the age of forty years as an Egyptian prince, begins to offer himself as a guide and teacher to his oppressed people, but they reject his mission with scorn. Then comes the scene of the appearance of Jehovah for their rescue and the appointment of Moses to accomplish their deliverance, and he drives home the parallel between Moses and the rejected Jesus.

This Moses, whom they refused, saying, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge?" the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer. "This is that Moses who said, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me: him shall ye hear." He then shows how the Jewish nation disobeyed Moses and God, and turned back to the golden calf of Egypt. He traces their history till the time of the building of the temple, but adds that "the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet: Heaven is my throne and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord. Hath not my hand made all these things?" We may imagine the fervor, the energy of this brief history, the tone, the spirit, the flashing eye that gave point to every incident. It was perfectly evident what he was coming to, what use he was going to make of this recital — that the Jews were not God's favorites *per se;* that they were and always had been an ungrateful, rebellious people; that God had chosen them, in spite of their sins, to be the unworthy guardians and receivers of a great mission for the whole world; that the temple was not a necessity, that it came late in their history, and that God himself had declared his superiority to it. It was easy to see that he was coming round to the mission of Jesus, the prophet

whom Moses had predicted, and whom they had rejected as they did Moses. But there was evidently a tumult rising, and Stephen saw that he was about to be interrupted, and therefore, suddenly, leaving the narrative unfinished, he breaks forth: —

"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost — as your fathers did so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? They slew them which prophesied the coming of that Just One of whom ye have been the betrayers and murderers; who have received the law by the dispensation of angels and have not kept it."

These words were as coals dropping upon naphtha. They were cut to the heart; they gnashed on him with their teeth; they raved round him as wild beasts who collect themselves for a deadly spring.

"But he, full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God."

There was something in his rapt appearance, his pale, upturned face and eager eyes, that caused a moment's silence.

In a voice of exultation and awe he said: —

"Behold! I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

The Son of man! — the very words that Christ had used when he stood before Caiaphas about fifty days before, when he said, "Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven!"

There was a frantic shriek of rage. The court broke up and became a blind, infuriate mob. All consideration was forgotten in the blind passion of the hour. Though they had no legal right to take life without a Roman sentence, they determined to have the blood of this man, cost what it might.

They hurried him out of the city with curses and execrations. The executioners stripped off their outer garments to prepare for the butchery, and laid them down at the feet of a young zealot named Saul of Tarsus.

There are many paintings of this scene in the galleries of Europe. We may imagine him, pale and enraptured, looking up into the face of that Jesus whom he saw in glory, and as they threw him violently down he cried, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Rising to his knees, wounded and bleeding, he added, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And then, says the narrative, "He fell asleep."

The sweetness and tenderness of this expression shows more than anything else how completely the faith of Christ had conquered death. Christians spoke of death simply as a sleep. And here amid the hootings and revilings of a mob, the crash of stones and insult and execration, nothing could hinder Christ's beloved from falling asleep. At peace within, with a heaven of love in his soul, he pitied and prayed for the wretched creatures who were murdering him, and passed to the right hand of Jesus — the first who had sealed his testimony with his blood.

Thus was sown again the first perfected seed of the new wheat which rose from the grave of Christ! Jesus was the first whom the world ever saw praying with his dying breath for his murderers; and Stephen, who had risen to the same majesty of denunciation and rebuke of sin which characterized his master, was baptized into the same tenderness of prayer for the miserable mob who were howling like wild beasts around him. Heavenly love never shrinks from denouncing sin; but it has a prayer for the sinner ever in its breast, and the nearer it comes to the higher world the more it pities this lower one.

But though the orator was crushed the cause was not lost.

Jesus, standing at the right hand of God, had only to reach forth and touch that Saul of Tarsus who stood consenting to his death, and he fell down at his feet trembling, crying, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

The noble work which Stephen had begun, the message of universal love to Jew and Gentile, passed from the hands of dying Stephen to the living Paul, who from that hour spoke the sentiment that must be the animating spirit of every true lover and follower of the Master's footsteps: "I am crucified with Christ; and now it is no more I that live, but Christ that liveth in me."

EARTHLY CARE A HEAVENLY DISCIPLINE

"Why should these cares my heart divide,
If Thou, indeed, hast set me free?
Why am I thus, if Thou hast died —
If Thou hast died to ransom me?"

NOTHING is more frequently felt and spoken of, as a hindrance to the inward life of devotion, than the "cares of life;" and even upon the showing of our Lord himself, the cares of the world are the thorns that choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful.

And yet, if this is a necessary and inevitable result of worldly care, why does the providence of God so order things that it forms so large and unavoidable a part of every human experience? Why is the physical system of man arranged with such daily, oft-recurring wants? Why does his nature, in its full development, tend to that state of society in which wants multiply, and the business of supply becomes more complicated, and requiring constantly more thought and attention, and bringing the outward and seen into a state of constant friction and pressure on the inner and spiritual?

Has God arranged an outward system to be a constant diversion from the inward — a weight on its wheels — a burden on its wings — and then commanded a strict and rigid inwardness and spirituality? Why placed us where the things that are seen and temporal must unavoidably have so much of our thoughts, and time, and care, yet said to us, "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth. Love not the world, neither the things of the world"? And why does one of our brightest

examples of Christian experience, as it should be, say, "While we look not on the things which are seen, but on the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal"?

The Bible tells us that our whole existence here is a disciplinary one; that this whole physical system, by which our spirit is inclosed with all the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, and wants which form a part of it, are designed as an education to fit the soul for its immortality; and as worldly care forms the greater part of the staple of every human life, there must be some mode of viewing and meeting it, which converts it from an enemy of spirituality into a means of grace and spiritual advancement.

Why, then, do we so often hear the lamentation, "It seems to me as if I could advance to the higher stages of Christian life, if it were not for the pressure of my business and the multitude of my worldly cares"? Is it not God, O Christian, who, in ordering thy lot, has laid these cares upon thee, and who still holds them about thee, and permits no escape from them? And as his great, undivided object is thy spiritual improvement, is there not some misapprehension or wrong use of these cares, if they do not tend to advance it? Is it not even as if a scholar should say, I could advance in science were it not for all the time and care which lessons, and books, and lectures require?

How, then, shall earthly care become heavenly discipline? How shall the disposition of the weight be altered so as to press the spirit upward towards God, instead of downward and away? How shall the pillar of cloud which rises between us and him become one of fire, to reflect upon us constantly the light of his countenance, and to guide us over the sands of life's desert?

It appears to us that the great radical difficulty is an

intellectual one, and lies in a wrong belief. There is not a genuine and real belief of the presence and agency of God in the minor events and details of life, which is necessary to change them from secular cares into spiritual blessings.

It is true there is much loose talk about an overruling Providence; and yet, if fairly stated, the belief of a great many Christians might be thus expressed: God has organized and set in operation certain general laws of matter and mind, which work out the particular results of life, and over these laws he exercises a general supervision and care, so that all the great affairs of the world are carried on after the counsel of his own will; and in a certain general sense, all things are working together for good to those that love God. But when some simple-minded, childlike Christian really proceeds to refer all the smaller events of life to God's immediate care and agency, there is a smile of incredulity, and it is thought that the good brother displays more Christian feeling than sound philosophy.

But as life for every individual is made up of fractions and minute atoms — as those things which go to affect habits and character are small and hourly recurring, it comes to pass that a belief in Providence so very wide and general is altogether inefficient for consecrating and rendering sacred the great body of what comes in contact with the mind in the experience of life. Only once in years does the Christian with this kind of belief hear the voice of the Lord God speaking to him. When the hand of death is laid on his child, or the bolt strikes down the brother by his side, then, indeed, he feels that God is drawing near; he listens humbly for the inward voice that shall explain the meaning and need of this discipline. When by some unforeseen occurrence the whole of his earthly property is swept away, — he becomes a poor man,

— this event, in his eyes, assumes sufficient magnitude to have come from God, and to have a design and meaning; but when smaller comforts are removed, smaller losses are encountered, and the petty every-day vexations and annoyances of life press about him, he recognizes no God, and hears no voice, and sees no design. Hence John Newton says, "Many Christians, who bear the loss of a child, or the destruction of all their property, with the most heroic Christian fortitude, are entirely vanquished and overcome by the breaking of a dish, or the blunders of a servant, and show so unchristian a spirit, that we cannot but wonder at them."

So when the breath of slander, or the pressure of human injustice, comes so heavily on a man as really to threaten loss of character, and destruction of his temporal interests, he seems forced to recognize the hand and voice of God, through the veil of human agencies, and in time-honored words to say: —

> "When men of spite against me join,
> They are the sword; the hand is thine."

But the smaller injustice and fault-finding which meet every one more or less in the daily intercourse of life, the overheard remark, the implied censure, too petty, perhaps, to be even spoken of, these daily recurring sources of disquietude and unhappiness are not referred to God's providence, nor considered as a part of his probation and discipline. Those thousand vexations which come upon us through the unreasonableness, the carelessness, the various constitutional failings, or ill adaptedness of others to our peculiarities of character, form a very large item of the disquietudes of life; and yet how very few look beyond the human agent, and feel these are trials coming from God! Yet it is true, in many cases, that these so-called minor vexations form the greater part, and in many cases the only discipline of life; and to those that do not view

them as ordered individually by God, and coming upon them by specified design, "their affliction 'really' cometh of the dust, and their trouble springs out of the ground;" it is sanctified and relieved by no divine presence and aid, but borne alone and in a mere human spirit, and by mere human reliances; it acts on the mind as a constant diversion and hindrance, instead of a moral discipline.

Hence, too, come a coldness, and generality, and wandering of mind in prayer: the things that are on the heart, that are distracting the mind, that have filled the soul so full that there is no room for anything else, are all considered too small and undignified to come within the pale of a prayer and so, with a wandering mind and a distracted heart, the Christian offers up his prayer for things which he thinks he ought to want, and makes no mention of those which he does. He prays that God would pour out his spirit on the heathen, and convert the world, and build up his kingdom everywhere, when perhaps a whole set of little anxieties, and wants, and vexations are so distracting his thoughts, that he hardly knows what he has been saying: a faithless servant is wasting his property; a careless or blundering workman has spoiled a lot of goods; a child is vexatious or unruly; a friend has made promises and failed to keep them; an acquaintance has made unjust or satirical remarks; some new furniture has been damaged or ruined by carelessness in the household; but all this trouble forms no subject matter for prayer, though there it is, all the while lying like lead on the heart, and keeping it down, so that it has no power to expand and take in anything else. But were God known and regarded as the soul's familiar friend, were every trouble of the heart as it rises breathed into his bosom, were it felt that there is not one of the smallest of life's troubles that has not been permitted by him, and permitted for specific good purpose to the soul, how much more

would these be in prayer! how constant, how daily might it become! how it might settle and clear the atmosphere of the soul! how it might so dispose and lay away many anxieties which now take up their place there, that there might be room for the higher themes and considerations of religion!

Many sensitive and fastidious natures are worn away by the constant friction of what are called little troubles. Without any great affliction, they feel that all the flower and sweetness of their life have faded; their eye grows dim, their cheek care-worn, and their spirit loses hope and elasticity, and becomes bowed with premature age; and in the midst of tangible and physical comfort, they are restless and unhappy. The constant undercurrent of little cares and vexations, which is slowly wearing on the finer springs of life, is seen by no one; scarce ever do they speak of these things to their nearest friends. Yet were there a friend of a spirit so discerning as to feel and sympathize in all these things, how much of this repressed electric restlessness would pass off through such a sympathizing mind.

Yet among human friends this is all but impossible, for minds are so diverse that what is a trial and a care to one is a matter of sport and amusement to another; and all the inner world breathed into a human ear only excites a surprised or contemptuous pity. Whom, then, shall the soul turn to? Who will feel that to be affliction which each spirit feels to be so? If the soul shut itself within itself, it becomes morbid; the fine chords of the mind and nerves by constant wear become jarring and discordant; hence fretfulness, discontent, and habitual irritability steal over the sincere Christian.

But to the Christian that really believes in the agency of God in the smallest events of life, that confides in his love, and makes his sympathy his refuge, the thousand

minute cares and perplexities of life become each one a fine affiliating bond between the soul and its God. God is known, not by abstract definition, and by high-raised conceptions of the soul's aspiring hours, but known as a man knoweth his friend; he is known by the hourly wants he supplies; known by every care with which he momentarily sympathizes, every apprehension which he relieves, every temptation which he enables us to surmount. We learn to know God as the infant child learns to know its mother and its father, by all the helplessness and all the dependence which are incident to this commencement of our moral existence; and as we go on thus year by year, and find in every changing situation, in every reverse, in every trouble, from the lightest sorrow to those which wring our soul from its depths, that he is equally present, and that his gracious aid is equally adequate, our faith seems gradually almost to change to sight; and God's existence, his love and care, seem to us more real than any other source of reliance, and multiplied cares and trials are only new avenues of acquaintance between us and heaven.

Suppose, in some bright vision unfolding to our view, in tranquil evening or solemn midnight, the glorified form of some departed friend should appear to us with the announcement, "This year is to be to you one of especial probation and discipline, with reference to perfecting you for a heavenly state. Weigh well and consider every incident of your daily life, for not one shall fall out by accident, but each one is to be a finished and indispensable link in a bright chain that is to draw you upward to the skies!"

With what new eyes should we now look on our daily lot! and if we found in it not a single change, — the same old cares, the same perplexities, the same uninteresting drudgeries still, — with what new meaning would every incident be invested! and with what other and sublimer

spirit could we meet them? Yet, if announced by one rising from the dead with the visible glory of a spiritual world, this truth could be asserted no more clearly and distinctly than Jesus Christ has stated it already. Not a sparrow falleth to the ground without our Father. Not one of them is forgotten by him; and we are of more value than many sparrows; yea, even the hairs of our head are all numbered. Not till belief in these declarations, in their most literal sense, becomes the calm and settled habit of the soul, is life ever redeemed from drudgery and dreary emptiness, and made full of interest, meaning, and divine significance. Not till then do its groveling wants, its wearing cares, its stinging vexations, become to us ministering spirits, each one, by a silent but certain agency, fitting us for a higher and perfect sphere.

THE MINISTRATION OF OUR DEPARTED FRIENDS

A NEW YEAR'S REVERIE

"It is a beautiful belief,
That ever round our head
Are hovering on viewless wings
The spirits of the dead."

WHILE every year is taking one and another from the ranks of life and usefulness, or the charmed circle of friendship and love, it is soothing to remember that the spiritual world is gaining in riches through the poverty of this.

In early life, with our friends all around us, — hearing their voices, cheered by their smiles, — death and the spiritual world are to us remote, misty, and half fabulous; but as we advance in our journey, and voice after voice is hushed, and form after form vanishes from our side, and our shadow falls almost solitary on the hillside of life, the soul, by a necessity of its being, tends to the unseen and spiritual, and pursues in another life those it seeks in vain in this.

For with every friend that dies, dies also some especial form of social enjoyment, whose being depended on the peculiar character of that friend; till, late in the afternoon of life, the pilgrim seems to himself to have passed over to the unseen world in successive portions half his own spirit; and poor indeed is he who has not familiarized himself with that unknown, whither, despite himself, his soul is earnestly tending.

One of the deepest and most imperative cravings of the human heart, as it follows its beloved ones beyond the veil, is for some assurance that they still love and care for us. Could we firmly believe this, bereavement would lose half its bitterness. As a German writer beautifully expresses it, "Our friend is not wholly gone from us; we see across the river of death, in the blue distance, the smoke of his cottage;" hence the heart, always creating what it desires, has ever made the guardianship and ministration of departed spirits a favorite theme of poetic fiction.

But is it, then, fiction? Does revelation, which gives so many hopes which nature had not, give none here? Is there no sober certainty to correspond to the inborn and passionate craving of the soul? Do departed spirits in verity retain any knowledge of what transpires in this world, and take any part in its scenes? All that revelation says of a spiritual state is more intimation than assertion; it has no distinct treatise, and teaches nothing apparently of set purpose; but gives vague, glorious images, while now and then some accidental ray of intelligence looks out, —

> "like eyes of cherubs shining
> From out the veil that hid the ark."

But out of all the different hints and assertions of the Bible we think a better inferential argument might be constructed to prove the ministration of departed spirits than for many a doctrine which has passed in its day for the height of orthodoxy.

First, then, the Bible distinctly says that there is a class of invisible spirits who minister to the children of men: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation?" It is said of little children, that "their angels do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven." This last

passage, from the words of our Saviour, taken in connection with the well-known tradition of his time, fully recognizes the idea of individual guardian spirits; for God's government over mind is, it seems, throughout, one of intermediate agencies, and these not chosen at random, but with the nicest reference to their adaptation to the purpose intended. Not even the All-seeing, All-knowing One was deemed perfectly adapted to become a human Saviour without a human experience. Knowledge intuitive, gained from above, of human wants and woes was not enough — to it must be added the home-born certainty of consciousness and memory; the Head of all mediation must become human. Is it likely, then, that, in selecting subordinate agencies, this so necessary a requisite of a human life and experience is overlooked? While around the throne of God stand spirits, now sainted and glorified, yet thrillingly conscious of a past experience of sin and sorrow, and trembling in sympathy with temptations and struggles like their own, is it likely that he would pass by these souls, thus burning for the work, and commit it to those bright abstract beings whose knowledge and experience are comparatively so distant and so cold?

It is strongly in confirmation of this idea, that in the transfiguration scene — which seems to have been intended purposely to give the disciples a glimpse of the glorified state of their Master — we find him attended by two spirits of earth, Moses and Elias, "which appeared with him in glory, and spake of his death which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." It appears that these so long departed ones were still mingling in deep sympathy with the tide of human affairs — not only aware of the present, but also informed as to the future. In coincidence with this idea are all those passages which speak of the redeemed of earth as being closely and indissolubly identified with Christ, members of his body, of his flesh and his bones. It is

not to be supposed that those united to Jesus above all others by so vivid a sympathy and community of interests are left out as instruments in that great work of human regeneration which so engrosses him; and when we hear Christians spoken of as kings and priests unto God, as those who shall judge angels, we see it more than intimated that they are to be the partners and actors in that great work of spiritual regeneration of which Jesus is the head.

What then? May we look among the band of ministering spirits for our own departed ones? Whom would God be more likely to send us? Have we in heaven a friend who knew us to the heart's core? a friend to whom we have unfolded our soul in its most secret recesses? to whom we have confessed our weaknesses and deplored our griefs? If we are to have a ministering spirit, who better adapted? Have we not memories which correspond to such a belief? When our soul has been cast down, has never an invisible voice whispered, "There is lifting up"? Have not gales and breezes of sweet and healing thought been wafted over us, as if an angel had shaken from his wings the odors of paradise? Many a one, we are confident, can remember such things — and whence come they? Why do the children of the pious mother, whose grave has grown green and smooth with years, seem often to walk through perils and dangers fearful and imminent as the crossing Mohammed's fiery gulf on the edge of a drawn sword, yet walk unhurt? Ah! could we see that attendant form, that face where the angel conceals not the mother, our question would be answered.

It may be possible that a friend is sometimes taken because the divine One sees that his ministry can act more powerfully from the unseen world than amid the infirmities of mortal intercourse. Here the soul, distracted and hemmed in by human events and by bodily infirmities, often scarce knows itself, and makes no impression on

others correspondent to its desires. The mother would fain electrify the heart of her child; she yearns and burns in vain to make her soul effective on its soul, and to inspire it with a spiritual and holy life; but all her own weaknesses, faults, and mortal cares cramp and confine her, till death breaks all fetters; and then, first truly alive, risen, purified, and at rest, she may do calmly, sweetly, and certainly, what, amid the tempests and tossings of life, she labored for painfully and fitfully. So, also, to generous souls, who burn for the good of man, who deplore the shortness of life, and the little that is permitted to any individual agency on earth, does this belief open a heavenly field. Think not, father or brother, long laboring for man, till thy sun stands on the western mountains, — think not that thy day in this world is over. Perhaps, like Jesus, thou hast lived a human life, and gained a human experience, to become, under and like him, a saviour of thousands; thou hast been through the preparation, but thy real work of good, thy full power of doing, is yet to begin.

But again: there are some spirits (and those of earth's choicest) to whom, so far as enjoyment to themselves or others is concerned, this life seems to have been a total failure. A hard hand from the first, and all the way through life, seems to have been laid upon them; they seem to live only to be chastened and crushed, and we lay them in the grave at last in mournful silence. To such, what a vision is opened by this belief! This hard discipline has been the school and task-work by which their soul has been fitted for their invisible labors in a future life; and when they pass the gates of the grave, their course of benevolent acting first begins, and they find themselves delighted possessors of what through many years they have sighed for — the power of doing good. The year just past, like all other years, has taken from

a thousand circles the sainted, the just, and the beloved; there are spots in a thousand graveyards which have become this year dearer than all the living world; but in the loneliness of sorrow how cheering to think that our lost ones are not wholly gone from us! They still may move about in our homes, shedding around an atmosphere of purity and peace, promptings of good, and reproofs of evil. We are compassed about by a cloud of witnesses, whose hearts throb in sympathy with every effort and struggle, and who thrill with joy at every success. How should this thought check and rebuke every worldly feeling and unworthy purpose, and enshrine us, in the midst of a forgetful and unspiritual world, with an atmosphere of heavenly peace. They have overcome — have risen — are crowned, glorified, but still they remain to us, our assistants, our comforters, and in every hour of darkness their voice speaks to us: "So we grieved, so we struggled, so we fainted, so we doubted; but we have overcome, we have obtained, we have seen, we have found — and in our victory behold the certainty of thy own."

RELIGIOUS SKETCHES

CHILDREN

"A little child shall lead them."

One cold market morning I looked into a milliner's shop, and there I saw a hale, hearty, well-browned young fellow from the country, with his long cart whip, and lion-shag coat, holding up some little matter, and turning it about on his great fist. And what do you suppose it was? *A baby's bonnet!* A little, soft, blue satin hood, with a swan's-down border, white as the new-fallen snow, with a frill of rich blonde around the edge.

By his side stood a very pretty woman, holding, with no small pride, the baby — for evidently it was *the* baby. Any one could read that fact in every glance, as they looked at each other, and then at the large, unconscious eyes, and fat, dimpled cheeks of the little one.

It was evident that neither of them had ever seen a baby like that before.

"But really, Mary," said the young man, "is n't three dollars very high?"

Mary very prudently said nothing, but taking the little bonnet, tied it on the little head, and held up the baby. The man looked, and without another word down went the three dollars — all the avails of last week's butter; and as they walked out of the shop, it is hard to say which looked the more delighted with the bargain.

"Ah," thought I, "a little child shall lead them."

Another day, as I was passing a carriage factory along one of our principal back streets, I saw a young mechanic at work on a wheel. The rough body of a carriage stood beside him, and there, wrapped up snugly, all hooded and cloaked, sat a little dark-eyed girl, about a year old, playing with a great, shaggy dog. As I stopped, the man looked up from his work, and turned admiringly towards his little companion, as much as to say, "See what I have got here!"

"Yes," thought I; "and if the little lady ever gets a glance from admiring swains as sincere as that, she will be lucky."

Ah, these children, little witches, pretty even in all their faults and absurdities. See, for example, yonder little fellow in a naughty fit. He has shaken his long curls over his deep blue eyes; the fair brow is bent in a frown, the rose leaf lip is pursed up in infinite defiance, and the white shoulder thrust angrily forward. Can any but a child look so pretty, even in its naughtiness?

Then comes the instant change; flashing smiles and tears as the good comes back all in a rush, and you are overwhelmed with protestations, promises, and kisses! They are irresistible, too, these little ones. They pull away the scholar's pen, tumble about his paper, make somersets over his books; and what can he do? They tear up newspapers, litter the carpets, break, pull, and upset, and then jabber unheard-of English in self-defense; and what can you do for yourself?

"If I had a child," says the precise man, "you should see."

He does have a child, and his child tears up his papers, tumbles over his things, and pulls his nose like all other children; and what has the precise man to say for himself? Nothing; he is like everybody else; "a little child shall lead him."

The hardened heart of the worldly man is unlocked by the guileless tones and simple caresses of his son; but he repays it in time, by imparting to his boy all the crooked tricks and callous maxims which have undone himself.

Go to the jail, to the penitentiary, and find there the wretch most sullen, brutal, and hardened. Then look at your infant son. Such as he is to you, such to some mother was this man. That hard hand was soft and delicate; that rough voice was tender and lisping; fond eyes followed him as he played, and he was rocked and cradled as something holy. There was a time when his heart, soft and unworn, might have opened to questionings of God and Jesus, and been sealed with the seal of Heaven. But harsh hands seized it; fierce goblin lineaments were impressed upon it; and all is over with him forever!

So of the tender, weeping child is made the callous, heartless man; of the all-believing child, the sneering skeptic; of the beautiful and modest, the shameless and abandoned; and this is what the world does for the little one.

There was a time when the divine One stood on earth, and little children sought to draw near to him. But harsh human beings stood between him and them, forbidding their approach. Ah, has it not always been so? Do not even we, with our hard and unsubdued feelings, our worldly and unspiritual habits and maxims, stand like a dark screen between our little child and its Saviour, and keep even from the choice bud of our hearts the sweet radiance which might unfold it for paradise? "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not," is still the voice of the Son of God; but the cold world still closes around and forbids. When, of old, disciples would question their Lord of the higher mysteries of his kingdom, he took a little child and set him in the midst, as a sign of him who should be greatest in heaven. That

gentle teacher remains still to us. By every hearth and fireside Jesus still sets the little child in the midst of us.

Wouldst thou know, O parent, what is that faith which unlocks heaven? Go not to wrangling polemics, or creeds and forms of theology, but draw to thy bosom thy little one, and read in that clear, trusting eye the lesson of eternal life. Be only to thy God as thy child is to thee, and all is done. Blessed shalt thou be, indeed, "when a little child shall lead thee."

THE OLD OAK OF ANDOVER

A REVERIE

Silently, with dreamy languor, the fleecy snow is falling. Through the windows, flowery with blossoming geranium and heliotrope, through the downward sweep of crimson and muslin curtain, one watches it as the wind whirls and sways it in swift eddies.

Right opposite our house, on our Mount Clear, is an old oak, the apostle of the primeval forest. Once, when this place was all wildwood, the man who was seeking a spot for the location of the buildings of Phillips Academy climbed this oak, using it as a sort of green watch-tower, from whence he might gain a view of the surrounding country. Age and time, since then, have dealt hardly with the stanch old fellow. His limbs have been here and there shattered; his back begins to look mossy and dilapidated; but, after all, there is a piquant, decided air about him, that speaks the old age of a tree of distinction, a kingly oak. To-day I see him standing, dimly revealed through the mist of falling snows; to-morrow's sun will show the outline of his gnarled limbs — all rose color with their soft snow burden; and again a few months, and spring will breathe on him, and he will draw a long breath, and break out once more, for the three hundredth time, perhaps, into a vernal crown of leaves. I sometimes think that leaves are the thoughts of trees, and that if we only knew it, we should find their life's experience recorded in them. Our oak! what a crop of meditations and remembrances must he have thrown forth, leafing out

century after century. Awhile he spake and thought only of red deer and Indians; of the trillium that opened its white triangle in his shade; of the scented arbutus, fair as the pink ocean shell, weaving her fragrant mats in the moss at his feet; of feathery ferns, casting their silent shadows on the checkerberry leaves, and all those sweet, wild, nameless, half-mossy things, that live in the gloom of forests, and are only desecrated when brought to scientific light, laid out and stretched on a botanic bier. Sweet old forest days! — when blue jay, and yellowhammer, and bobolink made his leaves merry, and summer was a long opera of such music as Mozart dimly dreamed. But then came human kind bustling beneath; wondering, fussing, exploring, measuring, treading down flowers, cutting down trees, scaring bobolinks — and Andover, as men say, began to be settled.

Stanch men were they — these Puritan fathers of Andover. The old oak must have felt them something akin to himself. Such strong, wrestling limbs had they, so gnarled and knotted were they, yet so outbursting with a green and vernal crown, yearly springing, of noble and generous thoughts, rustling with leaves which shall be for the healing of nations.

These men were content with the hard, dry crust for themselves, that they might sow seeds of abundant food for us, their children; men out of whose hardness in enduring we gain leisure to be soft and graceful, through whose poverty we have become rich. Like Moses, they had for their portion only the pain and weariness of the wilderness, leaving to us the fruition of the promised land. Let us cherish for their sake the old oak, beautiful in its age as the broken statue of some antique wrestler, brown with time, yet glorious in its suggestion of past achievement.

I think all this the more that I have recently come across the following passage in one of our religious papers.

The writer expresses a kind of sentiment which one meets very often upon this subject, and leads one to wonder what glamour could have fallen on the minds of any of the descendants of the Puritans, that they should cast nettles on those honored graves where they should be proud to cast their laurels.

"It is hard," he says, "for a lover of the beautiful — not a mere lover, but a believer in its divinity also — to forgive the Puritans, or to think charitably of them. It is hard for him to keep Forefathers' Day, or to subscribe to the Plymouth Monument; hard to look fairly at what they did, with the memory of what they destroyed rising up to choke thankfulness; for they were as one-sided and narrow-minded a set of men as ever lived, and saw one of Truth's faces only — the hard, stern, practical face, without loveliness, without beauty, and only half dear to God. The Puritan flew in the face of facts, not because he saw them and disliked them, but because he did not see them. He saw foolishness, lying, stealing, worldliness, — the very mammon of unrighteousness rioting in the world and bearing sway, — and he ran full tilt against the monster, hating it with a very mortal and mundane hatred, and anxious to see it bite the dust that his own horn might be exalted. It was in truth only another horn of the old dilemma, tossing and goring grace and beauty, and all the loveliness of life, as if they were the enemies instead of the sure friends of God and man."

Now, to those who say this we must ask the question with which Socrates of old pursued the sophist: What *is* beauty? If beauty be only physical, if it appeal only to the senses, if it be only an enchantment of graceful forms, sweet sounds, then indeed there might be something of truth in this sweeping declaration that the Puritan spirit is the enemy of beauty.

The very root and foundation of all artistic inquiry lies

here. What is beauty? And to this question God forbid that we Christians should give a narrower answer than Plato gave in the old times before Christ arose, for he directs the aspirant who would discover the beautiful to "consider of greater value the beauty existing *in the soul*, than that existing in the body." More gracefully he teaches the same doctrine when he tells us that "there are two kinds of Venus (beauty); the one, the elder, who had no mother, and was the daughter of Uranus (heaven), whom we name the celestial; the other, younger, daughter of Jupiter and Dione, whom we call the vulgar."

Now, if disinterestedness, faith, patience, piety, have a beauty celestial and divine, then were our fathers worshipers of the beautiful. If high-mindedness and spotless honor are beautiful things, they had those. What work of art can compare with a lofty and heroic life? Is it not better to be a Moses than to be a Michael Angelo making statues of Moses? Is not the life of Paul a sublimer work of art than Raphael's cartoons? Are not the patience, the faith, the undying love of Mary by the cross, more beautiful than all the Madonna paintings in the world. If, then, we would speak truly of our fathers, we should say that, having their minds fixed on that celestial beauty of which Plato speaks, they held in slight esteem that more common and earthly.

Should we continue the parable in Plato's manner, we might say that the earthly and visible Venus, the outward grace of art and nature, was ordained of God as a priestess, through whom men were to gain access to the divine, invisible One; but that men, in their blindness, ever worship the priestess instead of the divinity.

Therefore it is that great reformers so often must break the shrines and temples of the physical and earthly beauty, when they seek to draw men upward to that which is high and divine.

Christ says of John the Baptist, "What went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold they which are clothed in soft raiment are in kings' palaces." So was it when our fathers came here. There were enough wearing soft raiment and dwelling in kings' palaces. Life in papal Rome and prelatic England was weighed down with blossoming luxury. There were abundance of people to think of pictures, and statues, and gems, and cameos, vases and marbles, and all manner of deliciousness. The world was all drunk with the enchantments of the lower Venus, and it was needful that these men should come, Baptist-like in the wilderness, in raiment of camel's hair. We need such men now. Art, they tell us, is waking in America; a love of the beautiful is beginning to unfold its wings; but what kind of art, and what kind of beauty? Are we to fill our houses with pictures and gems, and to see that even our drinking cup and vase are wrought in graceful pattern, and to lose our reverence for self-denial, honor, and faith?

Is our Venus to be the frail, ensnaring Aphrodite, or the starry, divine Urania?

THE ELDER'S FEAST

A TRADITION OF LAODICEA

At a certain time in the earlier ages there lived in the city of Laodicea a Christian elder of some repute, named Onesiphorus. The world had smiled on him, and though a Christian, he was rich and full of honors. All men, even the heathen, spoke well of him, for he was a man courteous of speech and mild of manner.

His wife, a fair Ionian lady but half reclaimed from idolatry, though baptized and accredited as a member of the Christian Church, still lingered lovingly on the confines of old heathenism, and if she did not believe, still cherished with pleasure the poetic legends of Apollo and Venus, of Jove and Diana.

A large and fair family of sons and daughters had risen around these parents; but their education had been much after the rudiments of this world, and not after Christ. Though, according to the customs of the church, they were brought to the font of baptism, and sealed in the name of the Father, and the Son, and Holy Ghost, and although daily, instead of libations to the Penates, or flower offerings to Diana and Juno, the name of Jesus was invoked, yet the *spirit* of Jesus was wanting. The chosen associates of all these children, as they grew older, were among the heathen; and daily they urged their parents, by their entreaties, to conform, in one thing after another, to heathen usage. "Why should we be singular, mother?" said the dark-eyed Myrrah, as she bound her hair and arranged her dress after the fashion of the girls in the

temple of Venus. "Why may we not wear the golden ornaments and images which have been consecrated to heathen goddesses?" said the sprightly Thalia; "surely none others are to be bought, and are we to do altogether without?" "And why may we not be at feasts where libations are made to Apollo or Jupiter?" said the sons; "so long as we do not consent to it or believe in it, will our faith be shaken thereby?" "How are we ever to reclaim the heathen, if we do not mingle among them?" said another son; "did not our Master eat with publicans and sinners?"

It was, however, to be remarked, that no conversions of the heathen to Christianity ever took place through the means of these complying sons and daughters, or any of the number who followed their example. Instead of withdrawing any from the confines of heathenism, they themselves were drawn so nearly over, that in certain situations and circumstances they would undoubtedly have been ranked among them by any but a most scrutinizing observer. If any in the city of Laodicea were ever led to unite themselves with Jesus, it was by means of a few who observed the full simplicity of the ancient faith, and who, though honest, tender, and courteous in all their dealings with the heathen, still went not a step with them in conformity to any of their customs.

In time, though the family we speak of never broke off from the Christian Church, yet if you had been in it, you might have heard much warm and earnest conversation about things that took place at the baths, or in feasts to various divinities; but if any one spoke of Jesus, there was immediately a cold silence, a decorous, chilling, respectful pause, after which the conversation, with a bound, flew back into the old channel again.

It was now night; and the house of Onesiphorus the

Elder was blazing with torches, alive with music, and all the hurry and stir of a sumptuous banquet. All the wealth and fashion of Laodicea were there, Christian and heathen; and all that the classic voluptuousness of Oriental Greece could give to shed enchantment over the scene was there. In ancient times the festivals of Christians in Laodicea had been regulated in the spirit of the command of Jesus, as recorded by Luke, whose classical Greek had made his the established version in Asia Minor. "And thou, when thou makest a feast, call not thy friends and thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also bid thee, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, and the maimed, and the lame, and the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just."

That very day, before the entertainment, had this passage been quoted in the ears of the family by Cleon, the youngest son, who, different from all his family, had cherished in his bosom the simplicity of the old belief.

"How ridiculous! how absurd!" had been the reply of the more thoughtless members of the family, when Cleon cited the above passage as in point to the evening's entertainment. The dark-eyed mother looked reproof on the levity of the younger children, and decorously applauded the passage, which she said had no application to the matter in hand.

"But, mother, even if the passage be not literally taken, it must mean something. What did the Lord Jesus intend by it? If we Christians may make entertainments with all the parade and expense of our heathen neighbors, and thus spend the money that might be devoted to charity, what does this passage mean?"

"Your father gives in charity as handsomely as any Christian in Laodicea," said his mother warmly.

"Nay, mother, that may be; but I bethink me now of two or three times when means have been wanting for the relieving of the poor, and the ransoming of captives, and the support of apostles, when we have said that we could give no more."

"My son," said his mother, "you do not understand the ways of the world."

"Nay, how should he," said Thalia, "shut up day and night with that old papyrus of St. Luke and Paul's Epistles? One may have too much of a good thing."

"But does not the holy Paul say, 'Be not conformed to this world'?"

"Certainly," said the elder; "that means that we should be baptized, and not worship in the heathen temples."

"My dear son," said his mother, "you intend well, doubtless; but you have not sufficient knowledge of life to estimate our relations to society. Entertainments of this sort are absolutely necessary to sustain our position in the world. If we accept, we must return them."

But not to dwell on this conversation, let us suppose ourselves in the rooms now glittering with lights, and gay with every costly luxury of wealth and taste. Here were statues to Diana and Apollo, and to the household Juno — not meant for worship — of course not — but simply to conform to the general usages of good society; and so far had this complaisance been carried, that the shrine of a peerless Venus was adorned with garlands and votive offerings, and an exquisitely wrought silver censer diffused its perfume on the marble altar in front. This complaisance on the part of some of the younger members of the family drew from the elder a gentle remonstrance, as having an unseemly appearance for those bearing the Christian name; but they readily answered, "Has not Paul said, 'We know that an idol is nothing'? Where is the harm of an elegant statue, considered merely as a consummate work of art?

As for the flowers, are they not simply the most appropriate ornament? And where is the harm of burning exquisite perfume? And is it worse to burn it in one place than another?"

"Upon my sword," said one of the heathen guests, as he wandered through the gay scene, "how liberal and accommodating these Christians are becoming! Except in a few small matters in the temple, they seem to be with us entirely."

"Ah," said another, "it was not so years back. Nothing was heard among them, then, but prayers, and alms, and visits to the poor and sick; and when they met together in their feasts, there was so much of their talk of Christ, and such singing of hymns and prayer, that one of us found himself quite out of place."

"Yes," said an old man present, "in those days I quite bethought me of being some day a Christian; but look you, they are grown so near like us now, it is scarce worth one's while to change. A little matter of ceremony in the temple, and offering incense to Jesus, instead of Jupiter, when all else is the same, can make small odds in a man."

But now, the ancient legend goes on to say, that in the midst of that gay and brilliant evening, a stranger of remarkable appearance and manners was noticed among the throng. None knew him, or whence he came. He mingled not in the mirth, and seemed to recognize no one present, though he regarded all that was passing with a peculiar air of still and earnest attention; and wherever he moved, his calm, penetrating gaze seemed to diffuse a singular uneasiness about him. Now his eye was fixed with a quiet scrutiny on the idolatrous statues, with their votive adornments — now it followed earnestly the young forms that were wreathing in the graceful waves of the dance; and then he turned toward the tables, loaded with every luxury and sparkling with wines, where the devotion

to Bacchus became more than poetic fiction; and as he gazed, a high, indignant sorrow seemed to overshadow the calmness of his majestic face. When, in thoughtless merriment, some of the gay company sought to address him, they found themselves shrinking involuntarily from the soft, piercing eye, and trembling at the low, sweet tones in which he replied. What he spoke was brief; but there was a gravity and tender wisdom in it that strangely contrasted with the frivolous scene, and awakened unwonted ideas of heavenly purity even in thoughtless and dissipated minds.

The only one of the company who seemed to seek his society was the youngest, the fair little child Isa. She seemed as strangely attracted towards him as others were repelled; and when, unsolicited, in the frank confidence of childhood she pressed to his side, and placed her little hand in his, the look of radiant compassion and tenderness which beamed down from those eyes was indeed glorious to behold. Yet here and there, as he glided among the crowd, he spoke in the ear of some Christian words which, though soft and low, seemed to have a mysterious and startling power; for one after another, pensive, abashed, and confounded, they drew aside from the gay scene, and seemed lost in thought. That stranger — who was he? Who? The inquiry passed from mouth to mouth, and one and another, who had listened to his low, earnest tones, looked on each other with a troubled air. Erelong he had glided hither and thither in the crowd; he had spoken in the ear of every Christian — and suddenly again he was gone, and they saw him no more. Each had felt the heart thrill within — each spirit had vibrated as if the finger of its Creator had touched it, and shrunk conscious as if an omniscient eye were upon it. Each heart was stirred from its depths. Vain sophistries, worldly maxims, making the false look true, all appeared to rise and clear

away like a mist; and at once each one seemed to see, as God sees, the true state of the inner world, the true motive and reason of action, and in the instinctive pause that passed through the company, the banquet was broken up and deserted.

"And what if their God were present?" said one of the heathen members of the company, next day. "Why did they all look so blank? A most favorable omen, we should call it, to have one's patron divinity at a feast."

"Besides," said another, "these Christians hold that their God is always everywhere present; so, at most, they have but had their eyes opened to see Him who is always there!"

What is practically the meaning of the precept, "Be not conformed to the world"? In its every-day results, it presents many problems difficult of solution. There are so many shades and blendings of situation and circumstances, so many things, innocent and graceful in themselves, which, like flowers and incense on a heathen altar, become unchristian only through position and circumstances, that the most honest and well-intentioned are often perplexed.

That we must conform in some things is conceded; yet the whole tenor of the New Testament shows that this conformity must have its limits — that Christians are to be transformed, so as to exhibit to the world a higher and more complete style of life, and thus "prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

But in many particulars as to style of living and modes of social intercourse, there can be no definite rules laid down, and no Christian can venture to judge another by his standard.

One Christian condemns dress adornment, and the whole application of taste to the usages of life, as a sinful waste

of time and money. Another, perceiving in every work of God a love and appreciation of the beautiful, believes that there is a sphere in which he is pleased to see the same trait in his children, if the indulgence do not become excessive, and thus interfere with higher duties.

One condemns all time and expense laid out in social visiting as so much waste. Another remembers that Jesus, when just entering on the most vast and absorbing work, turned aside to attend a wedding feast, and wrought his first miracle to enhance its social enjoyment. Again, there are others who, because some indulgence of taste and some exercise for the social powers are admissible, go all lengths in extravagance, and in company, dress, and the externals of life.

In the same manner, with regard to style of life and social entertainment — most of the items which go to constitute what is called style of living, or the style of particular parties, may be in themselves innocent, and yet they may be so interwoven and combined with evils, that the whole effect shall be felt to be decidedly unchristian, both by Christians and the world. How, then, shall the well-disposed person know where to stop, and how to strike the just medium?

We know of but one safe rule: read the life of Jesus with attention — study it — inquire earnestly with yourself, "What sort of a person, in thought, in feeling, in action, was my Saviour?" — live in constant sympathy and communion with him — and there will be within a kind of instinctive rule by which to try all things. A young man, who was to be exposed to the temptations of one of the most dissipated European capitals, carried with him his father's picture, and hung it in his apartment. Before going out to any of the numerous resorts of the city, he was accustomed to contemplate this picture, and say to himself, "Would my father wish to see me in the

place to which I am going?" and thus was he saved from many a temptation. In like manner the Christian, who has always by his side the beautiful ideal of his Saviour, finds it a holy charm, by which he is gently restrained from all that is unsuitable to his profession. He has but to inquire of any scene or employment, "Should I be well pleased to meet my Saviour there? Would the trains of thought I should there fall into, the state of mind that would there be induced, be such as would harmonize with an interview with him?" Thus protected and defended, social enjoyment might be like that of Mary and John, and the disciples, when, under the mild, approving eye of the Son of God, they shared the festivities of Cana.

A SCENE IN JERUSALEM

It is now nearly noon, the busiest and most bustling hour of the day; yet the streets of the Holy City seem deserted and silent as the grave. The artisan has left his bench, the merchant his merchandise; the throngs of returned wanderers which this great national festival has brought up from every land of the earth, and which have been for the last week carrying life and motion through every street, seem suddenly to have disappeared. Here and there solitary footfalls, like the last pattering raindrops after a shower, awaken the echoes of the streets; and here and there some lonely woman looks from the housetop with anxious and agitated face, as if she would discern something in the far distance.

Alone, or almost alone, the few remaining priests move like white-winged, solitary birds over the gorgeous pavements of the temple, and as they mechanically conduct the ministrations of the day, cast significant glances on each other, and pause here and there to converse in anxious whispers.

Ah, there is one voice which they have often heard beneath those arches — a voice which ever bore in it a mysterious and thrilling charm — which they know will be hushed to-day. Chief priest, scribe, and doctor have all gone out in the death procession after him; and these few remaining ones, far from the excitement of the crowd, and busied in calm and sacred duties, find voices of anxious questioning rising from the depths of their own souls, "What if this indeed were the Christ?"

But pass we on out of the city, and what a surging tide of life and motion meets the eye, as if all nations under heaven had dashed their waves of population on this Judæan shore! A noisy, wrathful, tempestuous mob, billow on billow, waver and rally round some central object, which it conceals from view. Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia and Egypt, strangers of Rome, Cretes and Arabians, Jew and Proselyte, convoked from the ends of the earth, throng in agitated concourse one on another; one theme in every face, on every tongue, one name in every variety of accent and dialect passing from lip to lip —

"Jesus of Nazareth."

Look on that man — the centre and cause of all this outburst! He stands there alone. The cross is ready. It lies beneath his feet. The rough hand of a brutal soldier has seized his robe to tear it from him. Another with stalwart arm is boring the holes, gazing upward the while with a face of stupid unconcern. There on the ground lie the hammer and the nails: the hour, the moment of doom is come! Look on this man, as upward, with deep, sorrowing eyes, he gazes towards heaven. Hears he the roar of the mob? Feels he the rough hand on his garment? Nay, he sees not, feels not: from all the rage and tumult of the hour he is rapt away. A sorrow deeper, more absorbing, more unearthly seems to possess him, as upward with long gaze he looks to that heaven never before closed to his prayer, to that God never before to him invisible. That mournful, heaven-searching glance, in its lonely anguish, says but one thing: "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

Through a life of sorrow the realized love of his Father has shone like a precious and beautiful talisman in his bosom; but now, when desolation and anguish have come upon him as a whirlwind, this last star has gone out in

the darkness, and Jesus, deserted by man and God, stands there alone.

Alone? No; for undaunted by the cruel mob, fearless in the strength of mortal anguish, helpless, yet undismayed, stands the one blessed among women, the royal daughter of a noble line, the priestess to whose care was intrusted this spotless sacrifice. She and her son, last of a race of kings, stand there despised, rejected, and disavowed by their nation, to accomplish dread words of prophecy, which have swept down for far ages to this hour.

Strange it is, in this dark scene, to see the likeness between mother and son, deepening in every line of those faces, as they stand thus thrown out by the dark background of rage and hate, which like a storm-cloud lowers around. The same rapt, absorbed, calm intensity of anguish in both mother and son, save only that while he gazes upward towards God, she, with like fervor, gazes on him. What to her is the deriding mob, the coarse taunt, the brutal abuse? Of it all she hears, she feels nothing. She sinks not, faints not, weeps not; her whole being concentrates in the will to suffer by and with him to the last. Other hearts there are that beat for him; others that press into the doomed circle, and own him amid the scorn of thousands. There may you see the clasped hands and upraised eyes of a Magdalen, the pale and steady resolve of John, the weeping company of women who bewailed and lamented him; but none dare press so near, or seem so identical with him in his sufferings, as this mother.

And as we gaze on these two in human form, surrounded by other human forms, how strange the contrast! How is it possible that human features and human lineaments essentially alike can be wrought into such heaven-wide contrast? Man is he who stands there, lofty and spotless, in bleeding patience! Men also are those brutal soldiers,

alike stupidly ready, at the word of command, to drive the nail through quivering flesh or insensate wood. Men are those scowling priests and infuriate Pharisees. Men, also, the shifting figures of the careless rabble, who shout and curse without knowing why. No visible glory shines round that head; yet how, spite of every defilement cast upon him by the vulgar rabble, seems that form to be glorified! What light is that in those eyes! What mournful beauty in that face! What solemn, mysterious sacredness investing the whole form, constraining from us the exclamation, "Surely this is the Son of God." Man's voice is breathing vulgar taunt and jeer: "He saved others; himself he cannot save." "He trusted in God; let him deliver him if he will have him." And man's, also, clear, sweet, unearthly, pierces that stormy mob, saying, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

But we draw the veil in reverence. It is not ours to picture what the sun refused to shine upon, and earth shook to behold.

Little thought those weeping women, that stricken disciple, that heartbroken mother, how on some future day that cross — emblem to them of deepest infamy — should blaze in the eye of all nations, symbol of triumph and hope, glittering on gorgeous fanes, embroidered on regal banners, associated with all that is revered and powerful on earth. The Roman ensign that waved on that mournful day, symbol of highest earthly power, is a thing mouldered and forgotten; and over all the high places of old Rome, herself, stands that mystical cross, no longer speaking of earthly anguish and despair, but of heavenly glory, honor, and immortality.

Theologians have endlessly disputed and philosophized on this great fact of atonement. The Bible tells only that this tragic event was the essential point without which our salvation could never have been secured. But where lay

the necessity they do not say. What was that dread strait that either the divine One must thus suffer, or man be lost, who knoweth?

To this question answer a thousand voices, with each a different solution, urged with equal confidence — each solution to its framer as certain and sacred as the dread fact it explains — yet every one, perhaps, unsatisfactory to the deep-questioning soul. The Bible, as it always does, gives on this point not definitions or distinct outlines, but images — images which lose all their glory and beauty if seized by the harsh hands of metaphysical analysis, but inexpressibly affecting to the unlettered human heart, which softens in gazing on their mournful and mysterious beauty. Christ is called our sacrifice, our passover, our atoning high priest; and he himself, while holding in his hands the emblem cup, says, "It is my blood shed for many, for the remission of sins." Let us reason on it as we will, this story of the cross, presented without explanation in the simple metaphor of the Bible, has produced an effect on human nature wholly unaccountable. In every age and clime, with every variety of habit, thought, and feeling, from the cannibals of New Zealand and Madagascar to the most enlightened and scientific minds in Christendom, one feeling, essentially homogeneous in its character and results, has arisen in view of this cross. There is something in it that strikes one of the great nerves of simple, unsophisticated humanity, and meets its wants as nothing else will. Ages ago, Paul declared to philosophizing Greek and scornful Roman that he was not ashamed of this gospel, and alleged for his reason this very adaptedness to humanity. *A priori*, many would have said that Paul should have told of Christ living, Christ preaching, Christ working miracles, not omitting also the pathetic history of how he sealed all with his blood; but Paul declared that he determined to know nothing else but

Christ crucified. He said it was a stumbling-block to the Jew, an absurdity to the Greek; yet he was none the less positive in his course. True, there were many then, as now, who looked on with the most philosophic and cultivated indifference. The courtly Festus, as he settled his purple tunic, declared he could make nothing of the matter, only a dispute about one Jesus, who was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive; and perchance some Athenian, as he reclined on his ivory couch at dinner, after the sermon on Mars Hill, may have disposed of the matter very summarily, and passed on to criticisms on Samian wine and marble vases. Yet in spite of their disbelief, this story of Christ has outlived them, their age and nation, and is to this hour as fresh in human hearts as if it were just published. This "one Jesus which was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive," is nominally, at least, the object of religious homage in all the more cultivated portions of the globe; and to hearts scattered through all regions of the earth this same Jesus is now a sacred and living name, dearer than all household sounds, all ties of blood, all sweetest and nearest affections of humanity. "I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus," are words that have found an echo in the bosoms of thousands in every age since then; that would, if need were, find no less echo in thousands now. Considering Christ as a man, and his death as a mere pathetic story, — considering him as one of the great martyrs for truth, who sealed it with his blood, — this result is wholly unaccountable. Other martyrs have died, bravely and tenderly, in their last hours "bearing witness of the godlike" that is in man; but who so remembers them? Who so loves them? To whom is any one of them a living presence, a life, and all? Yet so thousands look on Jesus at this hour.

Nay, it is because this story strikes home to every

human bosom as an individual concern. A thrilling voice speaks from this scene of anguish to every human bosom: This is thy Saviour. Thy sin hath done this. It is the appropriative words, thine and mine, which make this history different from any other history. This was for *me*, is the thought which has pierced the apathy of the Greenlander, and kindled the stolid clay of the Hottentot; and no human bosom has ever been found so low, so lost, so guilty, so despairing, that this truth, once received, has not had power to redeem, regenerate, and disenthrall. Christ so presented becomes to every human being a friend nearer than the mother who bore him; and the more degraded, the more hopeless and polluted is the nature, the stronger comes on the living reaction, if this belief is really and vividly enkindled with it. But take away this appropriative, individual element, and this legend of Jesus' death has no more power than any other. He is to us no more than Washington, or Socrates, or Howard. And where is there not a touchstone to try every theory of atonement? Whatever makes a man feel that he is only a spectator, an uninterested judge in this matter, is surely astray from the idea of the Bible. Whatever makes him feel that his sins have done this deed, that he is bound, soul and body, to this Deliverer, though it may be in many points philosophically erroneous, cannot go far astray.

If we could tell the number of the stars, and call them forth by name, then, perhaps, might we solve all the mystic symbols by which the Bible has shadowed forth the far-lying necessities and reachings-forth of this event "among principalities and powers," and in "ages to come." But he who knows nothing of all this, who shall so present the atonement as to bind and affiance human souls indissolubly to their Redeemer, does all that could be done by the highest and most perfect knowledge.

The great object is accomplished, when the soul, rapt, inspired, feels the deep resolve: —

> "Remember Thee!
> Yea, from the table of my memory
> I 'll wipe away all trivial, fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
> That youth and observation copied there,
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter."

THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE

SKETCH FROM THE NOTE-BOOK OF AN OLD GENTLEMAN

NEVER shall I forget the dignity and sense of importance which swelled my mind when I was first pronounced old enough to go to meeting. That eventful Sunday I was up long before day, and even took my Sabbath suit to the window to ascertain by the first light that it actually was there, just as it looked the night before. With what complacency did I view myself completely dressed! How did I count over the rows of yellow gilt buttons on my coat! how my good mother, grandmother, and aunts fussed, and twitched, and pulled, to make everything set up and set down, just in the proper place! how my clean, starched white collar was turned over and smoothed again and again, and my golden curls twisted and arranged to make the most of me! and, last of all, how I was cautioned not to be thinking of my clothes. In truth, I was in those days a very handsome youngster, and it really is no more than justice to let the fact be known, as there is nothing in my present appearance from which it could ever be inferred. Everybody in the house successively asked me if I should be a good boy, and sit still, and not talk, nor laugh; and my mother informed me, *in terrorem*, that there was a tithing man, who carried off naughty children, and shut them up in a dark place behind the pulpit; and that this tithing man, Mr. Zephaniah Scranton, sat just where he could see me. This fact impressed my mind with more solemnity than all the exhortations which had preceded it — a proof of the efficacy of facts above reason. Under

shadow and power of this weighty truth, I demurely took hold of my mother's forefinger to walk to meeting.

The traveler in New England, as he stands on some eminence, and looks down on its rich landscape of golden grain and waving cornfield, sees no feature more beautiful than its simple churches, whose white taper fingers point upward, amid the greenness and bloom of the distant prospects, as if to remind one of the overshadowing providence whence all this luxuriant beauty flows; and year by year, as new ones are added to the number, or succeed in the place of old ones, there is discernible an evident improvement in their taste and architecture. Those modest Doric little buildings, with their white pillars, green blinds, and neat inclosures, are very different affairs from those great, uncouth mountains of windows and doors that stood in the same place years before. To my childish eye, however, our old meeting-house was an awe-inspiring thing. To me it seemed fashioned very nearly on the model of Noah's ark and Solomon's temple, as set forth in the pictures in my Scripture Catechism — pictures which I did not doubt were authentic copies; and what more respectable and venerable architectural precedent could any one desire? Its double rows of windows, of which I knew the number by heart, its doors with great wooden quirls over them, its belfry projecting out at the east end, its steeple and bell, all inspired as much sense of the sublime in me as Strasbourg Cathedral itself; and the inside was not a whit less imposing.

How magnificent, to my eye, seemed the turnip-like canopy that hung over the minister's head, hooked by a long iron rod to the wall above! and how apprehensively did I consider the question, what would become of him if it should fall! How did I wonder at the panels on either side of the pulpit, in each of which was carved and painted a flaming red tulip, bolt upright, with its leaves project-

ing out at right angles! and then at the grapevine, bas-relieved on the front, with its exactly triangular bunches of grapes, alternating at exact intervals with exactly triangular leaves. To me it was an indisputable representation of how grapevines ought to look, if they would only be straight and regular, instead of curling and scrambling, and twisting themselves into all sorts of slovenly shapes. The area of the house was divided into large square pews, boxed up with stout boards, and surmounted with a kind of baluster work, which I supposed to be provided for the special accommodation of us youngsters, being the "loop-holes of retreat" through which we gazed on the "remarkabilia" of the scene. It was especially interesting to me to notice the coming in to meeting of the congregation. The doors were so contrived that on entering you stepped down instead of up — a construction that has more than once led to unlucky results in the case of strangers. I remember once when an unlucky Frenchman, entirely unsuspicious of the danger that awaited him, made entrance by pitching devoutly upon his nose in the middle of the broad aisle; that it took three bunches of my grandmother's fennel to bring my risibles into anything like composure. Such exhibitions, fortunately for me, were very rare; but still I found great amusement in watching the distinctive and marked outlines of the various people that filled up the seats around me. A Yankee village presents a picture of the curiosities of every generation: there from year to year, they live on, preserved by hard labor and regular habits, exhibiting every peculiarity of manner and appearance, as distinctly marked as when they first came from the mint of nature. And as everybody goes punctually to meeting, the meeting-house becomes a sort of museum of antiquities — a general muster ground for past and present.

I remember still with what wondering admiration I used

to look around on the people that surrounded our pew. On one side there was an old Captain McLean, and Major McDill, a couple whom the mischievous wits of the village designated as Captain McLean and Captain McFat; and, in truth, they were a perfect antithesis, a living exemplification of flesh and spirit. Captain McLean was a mournful, lengthy, considerate-looking old gentleman, with a long face, digressing into a long, thin, horny nose, which, when he applied his pocket-handkerchief, gave forth a melancholy, minor-keyed sound, such as a ghost might make, using a pocket-handkerchief in the long gallery of some old castle.

Close at his side was the doughty, puffing Captain McDill, whose full-orbed, jolly visage was illuminated by a most valiant red nose, shaped something like an overgrown doughnut, and looking as if it had been thrown at his face, and happened to hit in the middle. Then there was old Israel Peters, with a wooden leg, which tramped into meeting, with undeviating regularity, ten minutes before meeting time; and there was Jedediah Stebbins, a thin, wistful, moonshiny-looking old gentleman, whose mouth appeared as if it had been gathered up with a needle and thread, and whose eyes seemed as if they had been bound with red tape; and there was old Benaiah Stephens, who used regularly to get up and stand when the minister was about half through his sermon, exhibiting his tall figure, long, single-breasted coat, with buttons nearly as large as a tea plate; his large, black, horn spectacles stretched down on the extreme end of a very long nose, and vigorously chewing, meanwhile, on the bunch of caraway which he always carried in one hand. Then there was Aunt Sally Stimpson, and old Widow Smith, and a whole bevy of little, dried old ladies, with small, straight, black bonnets, tight sleeves to the elbow, long silk gloves, and great fans, big enough for a windmill; and of a hot day it was

a great amusement to me to watch the bobbing of the little black bonnets, which showed that sleep had got the better of their owners' attention, and the sputter and rustling of the fans, when a more profound nod than common would suddenly waken them, and set them to fanning and listening with redoubled devotion. There was Deacon Dundas, a great wagon load of an old gentleman, whose ample pockets looked as if they might have held half the congregation, who used to establish himself just on one side of me, and seemed to feel such entire confidence in the soundness and capacity of his pastor that he could sleep very comfortably from one end of the sermon to the other. Occasionally, to be sure, one of your officious blue flies, who, as everybody knows, are amazingly particular about such matters, would buzz into his mouth, or flirt into his ears a passing admonition as to the impropriety of sleeping in meeting, when the good old gentleman would start, open his eyes very wide, and look about with a resolute air, as much as to say, "I was n't asleep, I can tell you;" and then setting himself in an edifying posture of attention, you might perceive his head gradually settling back, his mouth slowly opening wider and wider, till the good man would go off again soundly asleep, as if nothing had happened.

It was a good orthodox custom of old times to take every part of the domestic establishment to meeting, even down to the faithful dog, who, as he had supervised the labors of the week, also came with due particularity to supervise the worship of Sunday. I think I can see now the fitting out on a Sunday morning — the one wagon, or two, as the case might be, tackled up with an "old gray" or an "old bay," with a buffalo skin over the seat by way of cushion, and all the family, in their Sunday best, packed in for meeting; while Master Bose, Watch, or Towser stood prepared to be an outguard, and went meekly trot-

ting up hill and down dale in the rear. Arrived at meeting, the canine part of the establishment generally conducted themselves with great decorum, lying down and going to sleep as decently as anybody present, except when some of the business-loving bluebottles aforesaid would make a sortie upon them, when you might hear the snap of their jaws as they vainly sought to lay hold of the offender. Now and then, between some of the sixthlies, seventhlies, and eighthlies, you might hear some old patriarch giving himself a rousing shake, and pitpatting soberly up the aisles, as if to see that everything was going on properly, after which he would lie down and compose himself to sleep again; and certainly this was as improving a way of spending Sunday as a good Christian dog could desire.

But the glory of our meeting-house was its singers' seat — that empyrean of those who rejoiced in the divine, mysterious art of fa-sol-la-ing, who, by a distinguishing grace and privilege, could "raise and fall" the cabalistical eighth notes, and move serene through the enchanted region of flats, sharps, thirds, fifths, and octaves.

There they sat in the gallery that lined three sides of the house, treble, counter, tenor, and bass, each with its appropriate leaders and supporters; there were generally seated the bloom of our young people; sparkling, modest, and blushing girls on one side, with their ribbons and finery, making the place where they sat as blooming and lively as a flower garden, and fiery, forward, confident young men on the other. In spite of its being a meeting-house, we could not swear that glances were never given and returned, and that there was not often as much of an approach to flirtation as the distance and the sobriety of the place would admit. Certain it was, that there was no place where our village coquettes attracted half so many eyes or led astray half so many hearts.

But I have been talking of singers all this time, and

neglected to mention the Magnus Apollo of the whole concern, the redoubtable chorister, who occupied the seat of honor in the midst of the middle gallery, and exactly opposite to the minister. Certain it is that the good man, if he were alive, would never believe it; for no person ever more magnified his office, or had a more thorough belief in his own greatness and supremacy, than Zedekiah Morse. Methinks I can see him now as he appeared to my eyes on that first Sunday, when he shot up from behind the gallery, as if he had been sent up by a spring. He was a little man, whose fiery red hair, brushed straight upon the top of his head, had an appearance as vigorous and lively as real flame; and this, added to the ardor and determination of all his motions, had obtained for him the surname of the "Burning Bush." He seemed possessed with the very soul of song; and from the moment he began to sing, looked alive all over, till it seemed to me that his whole body would follow his hair upwards, fairly rapt away by the power of harmony. With what an air did he sound the important fa-sol-la in the ears of the waiting gallery, who stood with open mouths ready to seize their pitch, preparatory to their general *set to!* How did his ascending and descending arm astonish the zephyrs when once he laid himself out to the important work of beating time! How did his little head whisk from side to side, as now he beat and roared towards the ladies on his right, and now towards the gentlemen on his left! It used to seem to my astonished vision as if his form grew taller, his arm longer, his hair redder, and his little green eyes brighter, with every stave; and particularly when he perceived any falling off of time or discrepancy in pitch; with what redoubled vigor would he thump the gallery and roar at the delinquent quarter, till every mother's son and daughter of them skipped and scrambled into the right place again!

Oh, it was a fine thing to see the vigor and discipline with which he managed the business; so that if, on a hot, drowsy Sunday, any part of the choir hung back or sung sleepily on the first part of a verse, they were obliged to bestir themselves in good earnest, and sing three times as fast, in order to get through with the others. 'Kiah Morse was no advocate for your dozy, drawling singing, that one may do at leisure, between sleeping and waking, I assure you; indeed, he got entirely out of the graces of Deacon Dundas and one or two other portly, leisurely old gentlemen below, who had been used to throw back their heads, shut up their eyes, and take the comfort of the psalm, by prolonging indefinitely all the notes. The first Sunday after 'Kiah took the music in hand, the old deacon really rubbed his eyes and looked about him, for the psalm was sung off before he was ready to get his mouth opened, and he really looked upon it as a most irreverent piece of business.

But the glory of 'Kiah's art consisted in the execution of those good old billowy compositions called fuguing tunes, where the four parts that compose the choir take up the song, and go racing around one after another, each singing a different set of words, till, at length, by some inexplicable magic, they all come together again, and sail smoothly out into a rolling sea of song. I remember the wonder with which I used to look from side to side when treble, tenor, counter, and bass were thus roaring and foaming, — and it verily seemed to me as if the psalm was going to pieces among the breakers, — and the delighted astonishment with which I found that each particular verse did emerge whole and uninjured from the storm.

But alas for the wonders of that old meeting-house, how they are passed away! Even the venerable building itself has been pulled down, and its fragments scattered; yet still I retain enough of my childish feelings to wonder

whether any little boy was gratified by the possession of those painted tulips and grapevines, which my childish eye used to covet, and about the obtaining of which, in case the house should ever be pulled down, I devised so many schemes during the long sermons and services of summer days. I have visited the spot where it stood, but the modern, fair-looking building that stands in its room bears no trace of it; and of the various familiar faces that used to be seen inside not one remains. Verily, I must be growing old; and as old people are apt to spin long stories, I check myself, and lay down my pen.

LITTLE EDWARD

Were any of you born in New England, in the good old catechising, church-going, school-going, orderly times? If so, you may have seen my Uncle Abel; the most perpendicular, rectangular, upright, downright good man that ever labored six days and rested on the seventh.

You remember his hard, weather-beaten countenance, where every line seemed drawn with "a pen of iron and the point of a diamond;" his considerate gray eyes, that moved over objects as if it were not best to be in a hurry about seeing; the circumspect opening and shutting of the mouth; his down-sitting and up-rising, all performed with conviction aforethought — in short, the whole ordering of his life and conversation, which was, according to the tenor of the military order, "to the right about face — forward, march!"

Now, if you supposed, from all this triangularism of exterior, that this good man had nothing kindly within, you were much mistaken. You often find the greenest grass under a snowdrift; and though my uncle's mind was not exactly of the flower garden kind, still there was an abundance of wholesome and kindly vegetation there.

It is true, he seldom laughed, and never joked himself; but no man had a more serious and weighty conviction of what a good joke was in another; and when some exceeding witticism was dispensed in his presence, you might see Uncle Abel's face slowly relax into an expression of solemn satisfaction, and he would look at the author with a sort of quiet wonder, as if it was past his comprehension how such a thing could ever come into a man's head.

Uncle Abel, too, had some relish for the fine arts; in proof of which, I might adduce the pleasure with which he gazed at the plates in his family Bible, the likeness whereof is neither in heaven, nor on earth, nor under the earth. And he was also such an eminent musician, that he could go through the singing-book at one sitting without the least fatigue, beating time like a windmill all the way.

He had, too, a liberal hand, though his liberality was all by the rule of three. He did by his neighbor exactly as he would be done by. He loved some things in this world very sincerely; he loved his God much, but he honored and feared him more. He was exact with others; he was more exact with himself, and he expected his God to be more exact still.

Everything in Uncle Abel's house was in the same time, place, manner, and form, from year's end to year's end. There was old Master Bose, a dog after my uncle's own heart, who always walked as if he was studying the multiplication table. There was the old clock, forever ticking in the kitchen corner, with a picture on its face of the sun, forever setting behind a perpendicular row of poplar-trees. There was the never failing supply of red peppers and onions hanging over the chimney. There, too, were the yearly hollyhocks and morning-glories blooming about the windows. There was the "best room," with its sanded floor, the cupboard in one corner with its glass doors, the ever green asparagus bushes in the chimney, and there was the stand with the Bible and almanac on it in another corner. There, too, was Aunt Betsey, who never looked any older, because she always looked as old as she could; who always dried her catnip and wormwood the last of September, and began to clean house the first of May. In short, this was the land of continuance. Old Time never took it into his head to practice either

addition, or subtraction, or multiplication on its sum total.

This Aunt Betsey aforenamed was the neatest and most efficient piece of human machinery that ever operated in forty places at once. She was always everywhere, predominating over and seeing to everything; and though my uncle had been twice married, Aunt Betsey's rule and authority had never been broken. She reigned over his wives when living, and reigned after them when dead, and so seemed likely to reign on to the end of the chapter. But my uncle's latest wife left Aunt Betsey a much less tractable subject than ever before had fallen to her lot. Little Edward was the child of my uncle's old age, and a brighter, merrier little blossom never grew on the verge of an avalanche. He had been committed to the nursing of his grandmamma till he had arrived at the age of *in*discretion, and then my old uncle's heart so yearned for him that he was sent for to come home.

His introduction into the family excited a terrible sensation. Never was there such a contemner of dignities, such a violator of high places and sanctities, as this very Master Edward. It was all in vain to try to teach him decorum. He was the most outrageously merry elf that ever shook a head of curls, and it was all the same to him whether it was "Sabba' day" or any other day. He laughed and frolicked with everybody and everything that came in his way, not even excepting his solemn old father; and when you saw him, with his fair arms around the old man's neck, and his bright blue eyes and blooming cheek peering out beside the bleak face of Uncle Abel, you might fancy you saw spring caressing winter. Uncle Abel's metaphysics were sorely puzzled by this sparkling, dancing compound of spirit and matter; nor could he devise any method of bringing it into any reasonable shape, for he did mischief with an energy and perseverance that was

truly astonishing. Once he scoured the floor with Aunt Betsey's very Scotch snuff; once he washed up the hearth with Uncle Abel's most immaculate clothes-brush; and once he was found trying to make Bose wear his father's spectacles. In short, there was no use, except the right one, to which he did not put everything that came in his way.

But Uncle Abel was most of all puzzled to know what to do with him on the Sabbath, for on that day Master Edward seemed to exert himself to be particularly diligent and entertaining.

"Edward! Edward must not play Sunday!" his father would call out; and then Edward would hold up his curly head, and look as grave as the Catechism; but in three minutes you would see "pussy" scampering through the "best room," with Edward at her heels, to the entire discomposure of all devotion in Aunt Betsey and all others in authority.

At length my uncle came to the conclusion that "it was n't in natur' to teach him any better," and that "he could no more keep Sunday than the brook down in the lot." My poor uncle! he did not know what was the matter with his heart, but certain it was, he lost all faculty of scolding when little Edward was in the case, and he would rub his spectacles a quarter of an hour longer than common when Aunt Betsey was detailing his witticisms and clever doings.

In process of time our hero had compassed his third year and arrived at the dignity of going to school. He went illustriously through the spelling-book, and then attacked the Catechism; went from "man's chief end" to the "requirin's and forbiddin's" in a fortnight, and at last came home inordinately merry, to tell his father that he had got to "Amen." After this, he made a regular business of saying over the whole every Sunday evening, standing

with his hands folded in front and his checked apron folded down, occasionally glancing round to see if pussy gave proper attention. And, being of a practically benevolent turn of mind, he made several commendable efforts to teach Bose the Catechism, in which he succeeded as well as might be expected. In short, without further detail, Master Edward bade fair to become a literary wonder.

But alas for poor little Edward! his merry dance was soon over. A day came when he sickened. Aunt Betsey tried her whole herbarium, but in vain: he grew rapidly worse and worse. His father sickened in heart, but said nothing; he only stayed by his bedside day and night, trying all means to save, with affecting pertinacity.

"Can't you think of anything more, doctor?" said he to the physician, when all had been tried in vain.

"Nothing," answered the physician.

A momentary convulsion passed over my uncle's face. "The will of the Lord be done," said he, almost with a groan of anguish.

Just at that moment a ray of the setting sun pierced the checked curtains, and gleamed like an angel's smile across the face of the little sufferer. He woke from troubled sleep.

"Oh, dear! I am so sick!" he gasped feebly. His father raised him in his arms; he breathed easier, and looked up with a grateful smile. Just then his old playmate, the cat, crossed the room. "There goes pussy," said he; "oh, dear! I shall never play any more!"

At that moment a deadly change passed over his face. He looked up in his father's face with an imploring expression, and put out his hand as if for help. There was one moment of agony, and then the sweet features all settled into a smile of peace, and "mortality was swallowed up of life."

My uncle laid him down, and looked one moment at

his beautiful face. It was too much for his principles, too much for his consistency, and "he lifted up his voice and wept."

The next morning was the Sabbath, — the funeral day, — and it rose with "breath all incense and with cheek all bloom." Uncle Abel was as calm and collected as ever; but in his face there was a sorrow-stricken appearance touching to behold. I remember him at family prayers, as he bent over the great Bible and began the psalm, "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations." Apparently he was touched by the melancholy splendor of the poetry, for after reading a few verses he stopped. There was a dead silence, interrupted only by the tick of the clock. He cleared his voice repeatedly, and tried to go on, but in vain. He closed the book, and kneeled down to prayer. The energy of sorrow broke through his usual formal reverence, and his language flowed forth with a deep and sorrowful pathos which I shall never forget. The God so much reverenced, so much feared, seemed to draw near to him as a friend and comforter, his refuge and strength, "a very present help in time of trouble."

My uncle rose, and I saw him walk to the room of the departed one. He uncovered the face. It was set with the seal of death; but oh, how surpassingly lovely! The brilliancy of life was gone, but that pure, transparent face was touched with a mysterious, triumphant brightness, which seemed like the dawning of heaven.

My uncle looked long and earnestly. He felt the beauty of what he gazed on; his heart was softened, but he had no words for his feelings. He left the room unconsciously, and stood in the front door. The morning was bright, the bells were ringing for church, the birds were singing merrily, and the pet squirrel of little Edward was frolicking about the door. My uncle watched him as he ran first up one tree, and then down and up another, and then over

the fence, whisking his brush and chattering just as if nothing was the matter.

With a deep sigh Uncle Abel broke forth, "How happy that cretur' is! Well, the Lord's will be done."

That day the dust was committed to dust, amid the lamentations of all who had known little Edward. Years have passed since then, and all that is mortal of my uncle has long since been gathered to his fathers; but his just and upright spirit has entered the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Yes, the good man may have had opinions which the philosophical scorn, weaknesses at which the thoughtless smile; but death shall change him into all that is enlightened, wise, and refined, for he shall awake in "His" likeness, and "be satisfied."

CONVERSATION ON CONVERSATION

"For every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

"A VERY solemn sermon," said Miss B., shaking her head impressively, as she sat down to table on Sunday noon; then giving a deep sigh, she added, "I am afraid that if an account is to be rendered for all our idle words, some people will have a great deal to answer for."

"Why, Cousin Anna," replied a sprightly young lady opposite, "what do you mean by *idle words?*"

"All words that have not a strictly useful tendency, Helen," replied Miss B.

"I don't know what is to become of me, then," answered Helen, "for I never can think of anything useful to say. I sit and try sometimes, but it always stops my talking. I don't think anything in the world is so doleful as a set of persons sitting round, all trying to say something useful, like a parcel of old clocks ticking at each other. I think one might as well take the vow of entire silence, like the monks of La Trappe."

"It is probable," said Miss B., "that a greater part of our ordinary conversation had better be dispensed with. 'In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.' For my own part, my conscience often reproaches me with the sins of my tongue."

"I 'm sure you don't sin much that way, I must say," said Helen; "but, cousin, I really think it is a freezing business sitting still and reflecting all the time when friends are together; and, after all, I can't bring myself to

feel as if it were wrong to talk and chatter away a good part of the time, just for the sake of talking. For instance, if a friend comes in of a morning to make a call, I talk about the weather, my roses, my canary-birds, or anything that comes uppermost."

"And about lace, and bonnet patterns, and the last fashions," added Miss B. sarcastically.

"Well, supposing we do; where 's the harm?"

"Where 's the good?" said Miss B.

"The good! why, it passes time agreeably, and makes us feel kindly towards each other."

"I think, Helen," said Miss B., "if you had a higher view of Christian responsibility, you would not be satisfied with merely passing time agreeably, or exciting agreeable feelings in others. Does not the very text we are speaking of show that we have an account to give in the day of judgment for all this trifling, useless conversation?"

"I don't know what that text does mean," replied Helen, looking seriously; "but if it means as you say, I think it is a very hard, strait rule."

"Well," replied Miss B., "is not duty always hard and strait? 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way,' you know."

Helen sighed.

"What do you think of this, Uncle C.?" she said, after some pause. The uncle of the two young ladies had been listening thus far in silence.

"I think," he replied, "that before people begin to discuss, they should be quite sure as to what they are talking about, and I am not exactly clear in this case. You say, Anna," said he, turning to Miss B., "that all conversation is idle which has not a directly useful tendency. Now, what do you mean by that? Are we never to say anything that has not for its direct and specific object the benefit of others or of ourselves?"

"Yes," replied Miss B., "I suppose not."

"Well, then, when I say, 'Good-morning, sir; 't is a pleasant day,' I have no such object. Are these, then, idle words?"

"Why, no, not exactly," replied Miss B.; "in some cases it is necessary to say something, so as not to appear rude."

"Very well," replied her uncle. "You admit, then, that some things, which are not instructive in themselves considered, are to be said to keep up the intercourse of society?"

"Certainly; some things," said Miss B.

"Well, now, in the case mentioned by Helen, when two or three people with whom you are in different degrees of intimacy call upon you, I think she is perfectly right, as she said, in talking of roses, and canary-birds, and even of bonnet patterns, and lace, or anything of the kind, for the sake of making conversation. It amounts to the same thing as 'good-morning,' and 'good-evening,' and the other courtesies of society. This sort of small talk has nothing instructive in it, and yet it may be useful in its place. It makes people comfortable and easy, promotes kind and social feelings; and making people comfortable by any innocent means is certainly not a thing to be despised."

"But is there not great danger of becoming light and trifling if one allows this?" said Miss B. doubtfully.

"To be sure; there is always danger of running every innocent thing to excess. One might eat to excess, or drink to excess; yet eating and drinking are both useful in their way. Now, our lively young friend Helen, here, might perhaps be in some temptation of this sort; but as for you, Anna, I think you in more danger of another extreme."

"And what is that?"

"Of overstraining your mind by endeavoring to keep up a constant, fixed state of seriousness and solemnity, and not allowing yourself the relaxation necessary to preserve its healthy tone. In order to be healthy, every mind must have variety and amusement; and if you would sit down at least one hour a day, and join your friends in some amusing conversation, and indulge in a good laugh, I think, my dear, that you would not only be a happier person, but a better Christian."

"My dear uncle," said Miss B., "this is the very thing that I have been most on my guard against; I can never tell stories, or laugh and joke, without feeling condemned for it afterwards."

"But, my dear, you must do the thing in the testimony of a good conscience before you can do it to any purpose. You must make up your mind that cheerful and entertaining conversation — conversation whose first object is to amuse — is useful conversation in its place, and then your conscience will not be injured by joining in it."

"But what good does it do, uncle?"

"Do you not often complain of coldness and deadness in your religious feelings? of lifelessness and want of interest?"

"Yes, uncle."

"Well, this coldness and lifelessness is the result of forcing your mind to one set of thoughts and feelings. You become worn out — your feelings exhausted — deadness and depression ensue. Now, turn your mind off from these subjects — divert it by a cheerful and animated conversation, and you will find, after a while, that it will return to them with new life and energy."

"But are not foolish talking and jesting expressly forbidden?"

"That text, if you will look at the connections, does not forbid jesting in the abstract; but jesting on immodest subjects — which are often designated in the New Testa-

ment by the phraseology there employed. I should give the sense of it — neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor indelicate jests. The kind of sprightly and amusing conversation to which I referred, I should not denominate foolish, by any means, at proper times and places."

"Yet people often speak of gayety as inconsistent in Christians — even worldly people," said Miss B.

"Yes, because, in the first place, they often have wrong ideas as to what Christianity requires in this respect, and suppose Christians to be violating their own principles in indulging in it. In the second place, there are some, especially among young people, who never talk in any other way — with whom this kind of conversation is not an amusement, but a habit — giving the impression that they never think seriously at all. But I think, that if persons are really possessed by the tender, affectionate, benevolent spirit of Christianity — if they regulate their temper and their tongue by it, and in all their actions show an evident effort to conform to its precepts, they will not do harm by occasionally indulging in sprightly and amusing conversation — they will not make the impression that they are not sincerely Christians."

"Besides," said Helen, "are not people sometimes repelled from religion by a want of cheerfulness in its professors?"

"Certainly," replied her uncle, "and the difference is just this: if persons are habitually trifling and thoughtless, it is thought that they have *no* religion; if they are ascetic and gloomy it is attributed to their religion; and you know what Miss E. Smith says — that 'to be good and disagreeable is high treason against virtue.' The more sincerely and earnestly religious a person is, the more important it is that he should be agreeable."

"But, uncle," said Helen, "what does that text mean that we began with? What are idle words?"

"My dear, if you will turn to the place where the passage is (Matt. xii.) and read the whole page, you will see the meaning of it. Christ was not reproving anybody for trifling conversation at the time; but for a very serious slander. The Pharisees, in their bitterness, accused him of being in league with evil spirits. It seems, by what follows, that this was a charge which involved an unpardonable sin. They were not, indeed, conscious of its full guilt, — they said it merely from the impulse of excited and envious feeling, — but he warns them that in the day of judgment God will hold them accountable for the full consequences of all such language, however little they may have thought of it at the time of uttering it. The sense of the passage I take to be, 'God will hold you responsible in the day of judgment for the consequences of all you have said in your most idle and thoughtless moments.'"

"For example," said Helen, "if one makes unguarded and unfounded assertions about the Bible, which excite doubt and prejudice."

"There are many instances," said her uncle, "that are quite in point. Suppose in conversation, either under the influence of envy or ill will, or merely from love of talking, you make remarks and statements about another person which may be true or may not, — you do not stop to inquire, — your unguarded words set reports in motion, and unhappiness, and hard feeling, and loss of character are the result. You spoke idly, it is true, but nevertheless you are held responsible by God for all the consequences of your words. So professors of religion often make unguarded remarks about each other, which lead observers to doubt the truth of all religion; and they are responsible for every such doubt they excite. Parents and guardians often allow themselves to speak of the faults and weaknesses of their ministers in the presence of children and younger people — they do it thoughtlessly — but in so

doing they destroy an influence which might otherwise have saved the souls of their children; they are responsible for it. People of cultivated minds and fastidious taste often allow themselves to come home from church, and criticise a sermon, and unfold all its weak points in the presence of others on whom it may have made a very serious impression. While the critic is holding up the bad arrangement, and setting in a ludicrous point of view the lame figures, perhaps the servant behind his chair, who was almost persuaded to be a Christian by that very discourse, gives up his purposes, in losing his respect for the sermon; this was thoughtless — but the evil is done, and the man who did it is responsible for it."

"I think," said Helen, "that a great deal of evil is done to children in this way, by our not thinking of what we are saying."

"It seems to me," said Miss B., "that this view of the subject will reduce us to silence almost as much as the other. How is one ever to estimate the consequences of their words? — people are affected in so many different ways by the same thing."

"I suppose," said her uncle, "we are only responsible for such results as by carefulness and reflection we might have foreseen. It is not for ill-judged words, but for idle words, that we are to be judged — words uttered without any consideration at all, and producing bad results. If a person really anxious to do right misjudges as to the probable effect of what he is about to say on others, it is quite another thing."

"But, uncle, will not such carefulness destroy all freedom in conversation?" said Helen.

"If you are talking with a beloved friend, Helen, do you not use an instinctive care to avoid all that might pain that friend?"

"Certainly."

"And do you find this effort a restraint on your enjoyment?"

"Certainly not."

"And you, from your own feelings, avoid what is indelicate and impure in conversation, and yet feel it no restraint?"

"Certainly."

"Well, I suppose the object of Christian effort should be so to realize the character of our Saviour, and conform our tastes and sympathies to his, that we shall instinctively avoid all in our conversation that would be displeasing to him. A person habitually indulging jealous, angry, or revengeful feeling, a person habitually worldly in his spirit, a person allowing himself in skeptical and unsettled habits of thought, *cannot* talk without doing harm. This is our Saviour's account of the matter in the verses immediately before the passage we were speaking of — 'How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth evil things.' The highest flow of animal spirits would never hurry a pure-minded person to say anything indelicate or gross; and in the same manner, if a person is habitually Christian in all his habits of thought and feeling, he will be able without irksome watchfulness to avoid what may be injurious even in the most unrestrained conversation."

HOW DO WE KNOW

It was a splendid room. Rich curtains swept down to the floor in graceful folds, half excluding the light, and shedding it in soft hues over the fine old paintings on the walls, and over the broad mirrors that reflect all that taste can accomplish by the hand of wealth. Books, the rarest and most costly, were around, in every form of gorgeous binding and gilding, and among them, glittering in ornament, lay a magnificent Bible — a Bible too beautiful in its appointments, too showy, too ornamental, ever to have been meant to be read — a Bible which every visitor should take up and exclaim, "What a beautiful edition! what superb bindings!" and then lay it down again.

And the master of the house was lounging on a sofa, looking over a late review — for he was a man of leisure, taste, and reading — but, then, as to reading the Bible! — that forms, we suppose, no part of the pretensions of a man of letters. The Bible — certainly he considered it a very respectable book — a fine specimen of ancient literature — an admirable book of moral precepts; but, then, as to its divine origin, he had not exactly made up his mind: some parts appeared strange and inconsistent to his reason — others were revolting to his taste: true, he had never studied it very attentively, yet such was his general impression about it; but, on the whole, he thought it well enough to keep an elegant copy of it on his drawing-room table.

So much for one picture. Now for another.

Come with us into this little dark alley, and up a flight

of ruinous stairs. It is a bitter night, and the wind and snow might drive through the crevices of the poor room, were it not that careful hands have stopped them with paper or cloth. But for all this carefulness, the room is bitter cold — cold even with those few decaying brands on the hearth, which that sorrowful woman is trying to kindle with her breath. Do you see that pale, little, thin girl, with large, bright eyes, who is crouching so near her mother? — hark! — how she coughs. Now listen.

"Mary, my dear child," says the mother, "do keep that shawl close about you; you are cold, I know," and the woman shivers as she speaks.

"No, mother, not very," replies the child, again relapsing into that hollow, ominous cough. "I wish you would n't make me always wear your shawl when it is cold, mother."

"Dear child, you need it most. How you cough to-night!" replies the mother; "it really don't seem right for me to send you up that long, cold street; now your shoes have grown so poor, too; I must go myself after this."

"Oh, mother, you must stay with the baby — what if he should have one of those dreadful fits while you are gone! No, I can go very well; I have got used to the cold now."

"But, mother, I 'm cold," says a little voice from the scanty bed in the corner; "may n't I get up and come to the fire?"

"Dear child, it would not warm you; it is very cold here, and I can't make any more fire to-night."

"Why can't you, mother? There are four whole sticks of wood in the box; do put one on, and let 's get warm once."

"No, my dear little Henry," says the mother soothingly, "that is all the wood mother has, and I have n't any money to get more."

And now wakens the sick baby in the cradle, and

mother and daughter are both for some time busy in attempting to supply its little wants, and lulling it again to sleep.

And now look you well at that mother. Six months ago she had a husband, whose earnings procured for her both the necessaries and comforts of life; her children were clothed, fed, and schooled, without thoughts of hers. But husbandless, friendless, and alone in the heart of a great, busy city, with feeble health, and only the precarious resource of her needle, she has gone down from comfort to extreme poverty. Look at her now, as she is to-night. She knows full well that the pale, bright-eyed girl, whose hollow cough constantly rings in her ears, is far from well. She knows that cold, and hunger, and exposure of every kind, are daily and surely wearing away her life. And yet what can she do? Poor soul! how many times has she calculated all her little resources, to see if she could pay a doctor and get medicine for Mary — yet all in vain. She knows that timely medicine, ease, fresh air, and warmth might save her; but she knows that all these things are out of the question for her. She feels, too, as a mother would feel, when she sees her once rosy, happy little boy becoming pale, and anxious, and fretful; and even when he teases her most, she only stops her work a moment, and strokes his little thin cheeks, and thinks what a laughing, happy little fellow he once was, till she has not a heart to reprove him. And all this day she has toiled with a sick and fretful baby in her lap, and her little shivering, hungry boy at her side, whom Mary's patient artifices cannot always keep quiet; she has toiled over the last piece of work which she can procure from the shop, for the man has told her that after this he can furnish no more; and the little money that is to come from this is already portioned out in her own mind, and after that she has no human prospect of support.

But yet that woman's face is patient, quiet, firm. Nay, you may even see in her suffering eye something like peace. And whence comes it? I will tell you.

There is a Bible in that room, as well as in the rich man's apartment. Not splendidly bound, to be sure, but faithfully read — a plain, homely, much worn book.

Hearken now while she says to her children, "Listen to me, dear children, and I will read you something out of this book. 'Let not your heart be troubled; in my Father's house are many mansions.' So you see, my children, we shall not always live in this little, cold, dark room. Jesus Christ has promised to take us to a better home."

"Shall we be warm there all day?" says the little boy earnestly; "and shall we have enough to eat?"

"Yes, dear child," says the mother; "listen to what the Bible says: 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.'"

"I am glad of that," said little Mary, "for, mother, I never can bear to see you cry."

"But, mother," says little Henry, "won't God send us something to eat to-morrow?"

"See," says the mother, "what the Bible says: 'Seek ye not what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, neither be of anxious mind. For your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.'"

"But, mother," says little Mary, "if God is our Father, and loves us, what does he let us be so poor for?"

"Nay," says the mother, "our dear Lord Jesus Christ was as poor as we are, and God certainly loved him."

"Was he, mother?"

"Yes, children; you remember how he said, 'The Son of man hath not where to lay his head.' And it tells us

more than once that Jesus was hungry when there was none to give him food."

"Oh, mother, what should we do without the Bible?" says Mary.

Now, if the rich man, who had not yet made up his mind what to think of the Bible, should visit this poor woman, and ask her on what she grounded her belief of its truth, what could she answer? Could she give the arguments from miracles and prophecy? Could she account for all the changes which might have taken place in it through translators and copyists, and prove that we have a genuine and uncorrupted version? Not she! But how, then, does she know that it is true? How, say you? How does she know that she has warm life-blood in her heart? How does she know that there is such a thing as air and sunshine? She does not believe these things — she knows them; and in like manner, with a deep heart consciousness, she is certain that the words of her Bible are truth and life. Is it by reasoning that the frightened child, bewildered in the dark, knows its mother's voice? No! Nor is it only by reasoning that the forlorn and distressed human heart knows the voice of its Saviour, and is still.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS WITH MAMMON

It was four o'clock in the afternoon of a dull winter day that Mr. H. sat in his counting-room. The sun had nearly gone down, and, in fact, it was already twilight beneath the shadows of the tall, dusky stores, and the close, crooked streets of that quarter of Boston. Hardly light enough struggled through the dusky panes of the counting-house for him to read the entries in a much-thumbed memorandum-book, which he held in his hand.

A small, thin boy, with a pale face and anxious expression, significant of delicacy of constitution and a too early acquaintance with want and sorrow, was standing by him, earnestly watching his motions.

"Ah, yes, my boy," said Mr. H., as he at last shut up the memorandum-book. "Yes, I 've got the place now; I 'm apt to be forgetful about these things; come, now, let 's go. How is it? Have n't you brought the basket?"

"No, sir," said the boy timidly. "The grocer said he 'd let mother have a quarter for it, and she thought she 'd sell it."

"That 's bad," said Mr. H., as he went on, tying his throat with a long comforter of some yards in extent; and as he continued this operation he abstractedly repeated, "That 's bad, that 's bad," till the poor little boy looked quite dismayed, and began to think that somehow his mother had been dreadfully out of the way.

"She did n't want to send for help so long as she had anything she could sell," said the little boy in a deprecating tone.

"Oh yes, quite right," said Mr. H., taking from a pigeonhole in the desk a large pocketbook, and beginning to turn it over; and, as before, abstractedly repeating, "Quite right, quite right!" till the little boy became reassured, and began to think, although he didn't know why, that his mother had done something quite meritorious.

"Well," said Mr. H., after he had taken several bills from the pocketbook and transferred them to a wallet which he put into his pocket, "now we're ready, my boy." But first he stopped to lock up his desk, and then he said abstractedly to himself, "I wonder if I hadn't better take a few tracts."

Now, it is to be confessed that this Mr. H., whom we have introduced to our reader, was, in his way, quite an oddity. He had a number of singular little *penchants* and peculiarities quite his own, such as a passion for poking about among dark alleys, at all sorts of seasonable and unseasonable hours; fishing out troops of dirty, neglected children, and fussing about generally in the community till he could get them into schools or otherwise provided for. He always had in his pocketbook a note of some dozen poor widows who wanted tea, sugar, candles, or other things such as poor widows always will be wanting. And then he had a most extraordinary talent for finding out all the sick strangers that lay in out-of-the-way upper rooms in hotels, who, everybody knows, have no business to get sick in such places, unless they have money enough to pay their expenses, which they never do.

Besides this, all Mr. H.'s kinsmen and cousins, to the third, fourth, and fortieth remove, were always writing him letters, which, among other pleasing items, generally contained the intelligence that a few hundred dollars were just then exceedingly necessary to save them from utter ruin, and they knew of nobody else to whom to look for it.

And then Mr. H. was up to his throat in subscriptions

to every charitable society that ever was made or imagined; had a hand in building all the churches within a hundred miles; occasionally gave four or five thousand dollars to a college; offered to be one of six to raise ten thousand dollars for some benevolent purpose, and when four of the six backed out, quietly paid the balance himself, and said no more about it. Another of his innocent fancies was to keep always about him any quantity of tracts and good books, little and big, for children and grown-up people, which he generally diffused in a kind of gentle shower about him wherever he moved.

So great was his monomania for benevolence that it could not at all confine itself to the streets of Boston, the circle of his relatives, or even the United States of America. Mr. H. was fully posted up in the affairs of India, Burmah, China, and all those odd, out-of-the-way places, which no sensible man ever thinks of with any interest, unless he can make some money there; and money, it is to be confessed, Mr. H. didn't make there, though he spent an abundance. For getting up printing-presses in Ceylon for Chinese type, for boxes of clothing and what-not to be sent to the Sandwich Islands, for schoolbooks for the Greeks, and all other nonsense of that sort, Mr. H. was without a parallel. No wonder his rich brother merchants sometimes thought him something of a bore, since, his heart being full of all these matters, he was rather apt to talk about them, and sometimes to endeavor to draw them into fellowship, to an extent that was not to be thought of.

So it came to pass often, that though Mr. H. was a thriving business man, with some ten thousand a year, he often wore a pretty threadbare coat, the seams whereof would be trimmed with lines of white; and he would sometimes need several pretty plain hints on the subject of a new hat before he would think he could afford one.

Now, it is to be confessed the world is not always grateful to those who thus devote themselves to its interests; and Mr. H. had as much occasion to know this as any other man. People got so used to his giving, that his bounty became as common and as necessary as that of a higher Benefactor, "who maketh his sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust;" and so it came to pass that people took them, as they do the sunshine and the rain, quite as matters of course, not thinking much about them when they came, but particularly apt to scold when they did not come.

But Mr. H. never cared for that. He did not give for gratitude; he did not give for thanks, nor to have his name published in the papers as one of six who had given fifty thousand to do so and so; but he gave because it was in him to give, and we all know that it is an old rule in medicine, as well as morals, that what is in a man must be brought out. Then, again, he had heard it reported that there had been One of distinguished authority who had expressed the opinion that it was "more blessed to give than to receive," and he very much believed it — believed it because the One who said it must have known, since for man's sake he once gave away *all.*

And so, when some thriftless, distant relation, whose debts he had paid a dozen times over, gave him an overhauling on the subject of liberality, and seemed inclined to take him by the throat for further charity, he calmed himself down by a chapter or two from the New Testament and half a dozen hymns, and then sent him a good, brotherly letter of admonition and counsel, with a bank-note to enforce it; and when some querulous old woman, who had had a tenement of him rent free for three or four years, sent him word that if he did n't send and mend the water-pipes she would move right out, he sent and mended them. People said that he was foolish, and that it did n't

do any good to do for ungrateful people; but Mr. H. knew that it did *him* good. He loved to do it, and he thought also on some words that ran to this effect: "Do good and lend, hoping for nothing again." He literally hoped for nothing again in the way of reward, either in this world or in heaven, beyond the present pleasure of the deed; for he had abundant occasion to see how favors are forgotten in this world; and as for another, he had in his own soul a standard of benevolence so high, so pure, so ethereal, that but One of mortal birth ever reached it. He felt that, do what he might, he fell ever so far below the life of that spotless One — that his crown in heaven must come to him at last, not as a reward, but as a free, eternal gift.

But all this while our friend and his little companion have been pattering along the wet streets, in the rain and sleet of a bitter cold evening, till they stopped before a grocery. Here a large cross-handled basket was first bought, and then filled with sundry packages of tea, sugar, candles, soap, starch, and various other matters; a barrel of flour was ordered to be sent after him on a dray. Mr. H. next stopped at a dry goods store and bought a pair of blankets, with which he loaded down the boy, who was happy enough to be so loaded; and then, turning gradually from the more frequented streets, the two were soon lost to view in one of the dimmest alleys of the city.

The cheerful fire was blazing in his parlor, as, returned from his long, wet walk, he was sitting by it with his feet comfortably incased in slippers. The astral lamp was burning brightly on the centre-table, and a group of children were around it, studying their lessons.

"Papa," said a little boy, "what does this verse mean? It 's in my Sunday-school lesson. 'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.' "

"You ought to have asked your teacher, my son."

"But he said he did n't know exactly what it meant. He wanted me to look this week and see if I could find out."

Mr. H.'s standing resource in all exegetical difficulties was Dr. Scott's Family Bible. Therefore he now got up, and putting on his spectacles, walked to the glass bookcase, and took down a volume of that worthy commentator, and opening it, read aloud the whole exposition of the passage, together with the practical reflections upon it; and by the time he had done, he found his young auditor fast asleep in his chair.

"Mother," said he, "this child plays too hard. He can't keep his eyes open evenings. It 's time he was in bed."

"I was n't asleep, pa," said Master Henry, starting up with that air of injured innocence with which gentlemen of his age generally treat an imputation of this kind.

"Then can you tell me now what the passage means that I have been reading to you?"

"There 's so much of it," said Henry hopelessly, "I wish you 'd just tell me in short order, father."

"Oh, read it for yourself," said Mr. H., as he pushed the book towards the boy, for it was to be confessed that he perceived at this moment that he had not himself received any particularly luminous impression, though of course he thought it was owing to his own want of comprehension.

Mr. H. leaned back in his rocking-chair, and on his own private account began to speculate a little as to what he really should think the verse might mean, supposing he were at all competent to decide upon it. "'Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness,'" says he: "that 's money, very clearly. How am I to make friends with it or of it? Receive me into everlasting

habitations: that 's a singular kind of expression. I wonder what it means. Dr. Scott makes some very good remarks about it — but somehow I 'm not exactly clear." It must be remarked that this was not an uncommon result of Mr. H.'s critical investigations in this quarter.

Well, thoughts will wander; and as he lay with his head on the back of his rocking-chair, and his eyes fixed on the flickering blaze of the coal, visions of his wet tramp in the city, and of the lonely garret he had been visiting, and of the poor woman with the pale, discouraged face, to whom he had carried warmth and comfort, all blended themselves together. He felt, too, a little indefinite creeping chill, and some uneasy sensations in his head like a commencing cold, for he was not a strong man, and it is probable his long, wet walk was likely to cause him some inconvenience in this way. At last he was fast asleep, nodding in his chair.

He dreamed that he was very sick in bed, that the doctor came and went, and that he grew sicker and sicker. He was going to die. He saw his wife sitting weeping by his pillow — his children standing by with pale and frightened faces; all things in his room began to swim, and waver, and fade, and voices that called his name, and sobs and lamentations that rose around him, seemed far off and distant in his ear. "Oh, eternity, eternity! I am going — I am going," he thought; and in that hour, strange to tell, not one of all his good deeds seemed good enough to lean on — all bore some taint or tinge, to his purified eye, of mortal selfishness, and seemed unholy before the All Pure. "I am going," he thought; "there is no time to stay, no time to alter, to balance accounts; and I know not what I am, but I know, O Jesus, what thou art. I have trusted in thee, and shall never be confounded;" and with that last breath of prayer earth was past.

A soft and solemn breathing, as of music, awakened him. As an infant child not yet fully awake hears the holy warblings of his mother's hymn, and smiles half conscious, so the heaven-born became aware of sweet voices and loving faces around him ere yet he fully woke to the new immortal Life.

"Ah, he has come at last. How long we have waited for him! Here he is among us. Now forever welcome! welcome!" said the voices.

Who shall speak the joy of that latest birth, the birth from death to life! the sweet, calm, inbreathing consciousness of purity and rest, the certainty that all sin, all weakness and error, are at last gone forever; the deep, immortal rapture of repose — felt to be but begun — never to end!

So the eyes of the heaven-born opened on the new heaven and the new earth, and wondered at the crowd of loving faces that thronged about him. Fair, godlike forms of beauty, such as earth never knew, pressed round him with blessings, thanks, and welcome.

The man spoke not, but he wondered in his heart who they were, and whence it came that they knew him; and as soon as the inquiry formed itself in his soul, it was read at once by his heavenly friends. "I," said one bright spirit, "was a poor boy whom you found in the streets: you sought me out, you sent me to school, you watched over me, and led me to the house of God; and now here I am." "And we," said other voices, "are other neglected children whom you redeemed; we also thank you." "And I," said another, "was a lost, helpless girl: sold to sin and shame, nobody thought I could be saved; everybody passed me by till you came. You built a home, a refuge for such poor wretches as I, and there I and many like me heard of Jesus; and here we are." "And I," said another, "was once a clerk in your store. I came to the

city innocent, but I was betrayed by the tempter. I forgot my mother, and my mother's God. I went to the gaming-table and the theatre, and at last I robbed your drawer. You might have justly cast me off; but you bore with me, you watched over me, you saved me. I am here through you this day." "And I," said another, "was a poor slave girl — doomed to be sold on the auction-block to a life of infamy, and the ruin of soul and body. Had you not been willing to give so largely for my ransom, no one had thought to buy me. You stimulated others to give, and I was redeemed. I lived a Christian mother to bring my children up for Christ — they are all here with me to bless you this day, and their children on earth, and their children's children are growing up to bless you." "And I," said another, "was an unbeliever. In the pride of my intellect, I thought I could demonstrate the absurdity of Christianity. I thought I could answer the argument from miracles and prophecy; but your patient, self-denying life was an argument I never could answer. When I saw you spending all your time and all your money in efforts for your fellow men, undiscouraged by ingratitude, and careless of praise, then I thought, 'There is something divine in that man's life,' and that thought brought me here."

The man looked around on the gathering congregation, and he saw that there was no one whom he had drawn heavenward that had not also drawn thither myriads of others. In his lifetime he had been scattering seeds of good around from hour to hour, almost unconsciously; and now he saw every seed springing up into a widening forest of immortal beauty and glory. It seemed to him that there was to be no end of the numbers that flocked to claim him as their long-expected soul friend. His heart was full, and his face became as that of an angel as he looked up to One who seemed nearer than all, and said,

"This is thy love for me, unworthy, O Jesus. Of thee, and to thee, and through thee are all things. Amen."

Amen! as with chorus of many waters and mighty thunderings the sound swept onward, and died far off in chiming echoes among the distant stars, and the man awoke.

THE SABBATH

SKETCHES FROM A NOTE-BOOK OF AN ELDERLY GENTLEMAN

The Puritan Sabbath — is there such a thing existing now, or has it gone with the things that were, to be looked at as a curiosity in the museum of the past? Can any one, in memory, take himself back to the unbroken stillness of that day, and recall the sense of religious awe which seemed to brood in the very atmosphere, checking the merry laugh of childhood, and chaining in unwonted stillness the tongue of volatile youth, and imparting even to the sunshine of heaven, and the unconscious notes of animals, a tone of its own gravity and repose? If you cannot remember these things, go back with me to the verge of early boyhood, and live with me one of the Sabbaths that I have spent beneath the roof of my uncle, Phineas Fletcher.

Imagine the long sunny hours of a Saturday afternoon insensibly slipping away, as we youngsters are exploring the length and breadth of a trout stream, or chasing gray squirrels, or building mud milldams in the brook. The sun sinks lower and lower, but we still think it does not want half an hour to sundown. At last, he so evidently is really going down, that there is no room for skepticism or latitude of opinion on the subject; and with many a lingering regret, we began to put away our fish-hooks, and hang our hoops over our arm, preparatory to trudging homeward.

"Oh, Henry, don't you wish that Saturday afternoons lasted longer?" said little John to me.

"I do," says Cousin Bill, who was never the boy to mince matters in giving his sentiments; "and I would n't care if Sunday did n't come but once a year."

"Oh, Bill, that 's wicked, I 'm afraid," says little conscientious Susan, who, with her doll in hand, was coming home from a Saturday afternoon visit.

"Can't help it," says Bill, catching Susan's bag, and tossing it in the air; "I never did like to sit still, and that 's why I hate Sundays."

"Hate Sundays! Oh, Bill! Why, Aunt Kezzy says heaven is an eternal Sabbath — only think of that!"

"Well, I know I must be pretty different from what I am now before I could sit still forever," said Bill in a lower and somewhat disconcerted tone, as if admitting the force of the consideration.

The rest of us began to look very grave, and to think that we must get to liking Sunday some time or other, or it would be a very bad thing for us. As we drew near the dwelling, the compact and businesslike form of Aunt Kezzy was seen emerging from the house to hasten our approach.

"How often have I told you, young ones, not to stay out after sundown on Saturday night? Don't you know it 's the same as Sunday, you wicked children, you? Come right into the house, every one of you, and never let me hear of such a thing again."

This was Aunt Kezzy's regular exordium every Saturday night; for we children, being blinded, as she supposed, by natural depravity, always made strange mistakes in reckoning time on Saturday afternoons. After being duly suppered and scrubbed, we were enjoined to go to bed, and remember that to-morrow was Sunday, and that we must not laugh and play in the morning. With many a sorrowful look did Susan deposit her doll in the chest,

and give one lingering glance at the patchwork she was piecing for dolly's bed, while William, John, and myself emptied our pockets of all superfluous fish-hooks, bits of twine, popguns, slices of potato, marbles, and all the various items of boy property, which, to keep us from temptation, were taken into Aunt Kezzy's safe-keeping over Sunday.

My Uncle Phineas was a man of great exactness, and Sunday was the centre of his whole worldly and religious system. Everything with regard to his worldly business was so arranged that by Saturday noon it seemed to come to a close of itself. All his accounts were looked over, his workmen paid, all borrowed things returned, and lent things sent after, and every tool and article belonging to the farm was returned to its own place at exactly such an hour every Saturday afternoon, and an hour before sun-down every item of preparation, even to the blacking of his Sunday shoes and the brushing of his Sunday coat, was entirely concluded; and at the going down of the sun, the stillness of the Sabbath seemed to settle down over the whole dwelling.

And now it is Sunday morning; and though all without is fragrance, and motion, and beauty, the dewdrops are twinkling, butterflies fluttering, and merry birds caroling and racketing as if they never could sing loud or fast enough, yet within there is such a stillness that the tick of the tall mahogany clock is audible through the whole house, and the buzz of the blue flies, as they whiz along up and down the window-panes, is a distinct item of hearing. Look into the best front room, and you may see the upright form of my Uncle Phineas, in his immaculate Sunday clothes, with his Bible spread open on the little stand before him, and even a deeper than usual gravity settling down over his toil-worn features. Alongside, in well-brushed Sunday clothes, with clean faces and smooth

hair, sat the whole of us younger people, each drawn up in a chair, with hat and handkerchief, ready for the first stroke of the bell, while Aunt Kezzy, all trimmed, and primmed, and made ready for meeting, sat reading her psalm-book, only looking up occasionally to give an additional jerk to some shirt-collar, or the fifteenth pull to Susan's frock, or to repress any straggling looks that might be wandering about, "beholding vanity."

A stranger, in glancing at Uncle Phineas as he sat intent on his Sunday reading, might have seen that the Sabbath was in his heart — there was no mistake about it. It was plain that he had put by all worldly thoughts when he shut up his account-book, and that his mind was as free from every earthly association as his Sunday coat was from dust. The slave of worldliness, who is driven, by perplexing business or adventurous speculation, through the hours of a half-kept Sabbath to the fatigues of another week, might envy the unbroken quiet, the sunny tranquillity, which hallowed the weekly rest of my uncle.

The Sabbath of the Puritan Christian was the golden day, and all its associations, and all its thoughts, words, and deeds, were so entirely distinct from the ordinary material of life, that it was to him a sort of weekly translation — a quitting of this world to sojourn a day in a better; and year after year, as each Sabbath set its seal on the completed labors of a week, the pilgrim felt that one more stage of his earthly journey was completed, and that he was one week nearer to his eternal rest. And as years, with their changes, came on, and the strong man grew old, and missed, one after another, familiar forms that had risen around his earlier years, the face of the Sabbath became like that of an old and tried friend, carrying him back to the scenes of his youth, and connecting him with scenes long gone by, restoring to him the dew and freshness of brighter and more buoyant days.

Viewed simply as an institution for a Christian and mature mind, nothing could be more perfect than the Puritan Sabbath: if it had any failing, it was in the want of adaptation to children, and to those not interested in its peculiar duties. If you had been in the dwelling of my uncle of a Sabbath morning, you must have found the unbroken stillness delightful; the calm and quiet must have soothed and disposed you for contemplation, and the evident appearance of single-hearted devotion to the duties of the day in the elder part of the family must have been a striking addition to the picture. But, then, if your eye had watched attentively the motions of us juveniles, you might have seen that what was so very invigorating to the disciplined Christian was a weariness to young flesh and bones. Then there was not, as now, the intellectual relaxation afforded by the Sunday-school, with its various forms of religious exercise, its thousand modes of interesting and useful information. Our whole stock in this line was the Bible and Primer, and these were our main dependence for whiling away the tedious hours between our early breakfast and the signal for meeting. How often was our invention stretched to find wherewithal to keep up our stock of excitement in a line with the duties of the day! For the first half hour, perhaps, a story in the Bible answered our purpose very well; but, having dispatched the history of Joseph, or the story of the ten plagues, we then took to the Primer: and then there was, first, the looking over the system of theological and ethical teaching, commencing, "In Adam's fall we sinnéd all," and extending through three or four pages of pictorial and poetic embellishment. Next was the death of John Rogers, who was burned at Smithfield; and for a while we could entertain ourselves with counting all his "nine children and one at the breast," as in the picture they stand in a regular row, like a pair of stairs. These being done, came miscella-

neous exercises of our own invention, such as counting all the psalms in the psalm-book, backward and forward, to and from the Doxology, or numbering the books in the Bible, or some other such device as we deemed within the pale of religious employments. When all these failed, and it still wanted an hour of meeting time, we looked up at the ceiling, and down at the floor, and all around into every corner, to see what we could do next; and happy was he who could spy a pin gleaming in some distant crack, and forthwith muster an occasion for getting down to pick it up. Then there was the infallible recollection that we wanted a drink of water, as an excuse to get out to the well; or else we heard some strange noise among the chickens, and insisted that it was essential that we should see what was the matter; or else pussy would jump on to the table, when all of us would spring to drive her down; while there was a most assiduous watching of the clock to see when the first bell would ring. Happy was it for us, in the interim, if we did not begin to look at each other and make up faces, or slyly slip off and on our shoes, or some other incipient attempts at roguery, which would gradually so undermine our gravity that there would be some sudden explosion of merriment, whereat Uncle Phineas would look up and say, "Tut, tut," and Aunt Kezzy would make a speech about wicked children breaking the Sabbath day. I remember once how my Cousin Bill got into deep disgrace one Sunday by a roguish trick. He was just about to close his Bible with all sobriety, when snap came a grasshopper through an open window, and alighted in the middle of the page. Bill instantly kidnapped the intruder, for so important an auxiliary in the way of employment was not to be despised. Presently we children looked towards Bill, and there he sat, very demurely reading his Bible, with the grasshopper hanging by one leg from the corner of his mouth, kicking and

sprawling, without in the least disturbing Master William's gravity. We all burst into an uproarious laugh. But it came to be rather a serious affair for Bill, as his good father was in the practice of enforcing truth and duty by certain modes of moral suasion much recommended by Solomon, though fallen into disrepute at the present day.

This morning picture may give a good specimen of the whole livelong Sunday, which presented only an alternation of similar scenes until sunset, when a universal unchaining of tongues and a general scamper proclaimed that the "sun was down."

But, it may be asked, what was the result of all this strictness? Did it not disgust you with the Sabbath and with religion? No, it did not. It did not, because it was the result of no unkindly feeling, but of consistent principle; and consistency of principle is what even children learn to appreciate and revere. The law of obedience and of reverence for the Sabbath was constraining so equally on the young and the old, that its claims came to be regarded like those immutable laws of nature, which no one thinks of being out of patience with, though they sometimes bear hard on personal convenience. The effect of the system was to ingrain into our character a veneration for the Sabbath which no friction of after life would ever efface. I have lived to wander in many climates and foreign lands, where the Sabbath is an unknown name, or where it is only recognized by noisy mirth; but never has the day returned without bringing with it a breathing of religious awe, and even a yearning for the unbroken stillness, the placid repose, and the simple devotion of the Puritan Sabbath.

ANOTHER SCENE

"How late we are this morning!" said Mrs. Roberts to her husband, glancing hurriedly at the clock, as they were

sitting down to breakfast on a Sabbath morning. "Really, it is a shame to us to be so late Sundays. I wonder John and Henry are not up yet: Hannah, did you speak to them?"

"Yes, ma'am, but I could not make them mind; they said it was Sunday, and that we always have breakfast later Sundays."

"Well, it is a shame to us, I must say," said Mrs. Roberts, sitting down to the table. "I never lie late myself unless something in particular happens. Last night I was out very late, and Sabbath before last I had a bad headache."

"Well, well, my dear," said Mr. Roberts, "it is not worth while to worry yourself about it; Sunday is a day of rest; everybody indulges a little of a Sunday morning, it is so very natural, you know; one's work done up, one feels like taking a little rest."

"Well, I must say it was not the way my mother brought me up," said Mrs. Roberts; "and I really can't feel it to be right."

This last part of the discourse had been listened to by two sleepy-looking boys, who had, meanwhile, taken their seats at table with that listless air which is the result of late sleeping.

"Oh, by the bye, my dear, what did you give for those hams Saturday?" said Mr. Roberts.

"Eleven cents a pound, I believe," replied Mrs. Roberts; "but Stephens and Philips have some much nicer, canvas and all, for ten cents. I think we had better get our things at Stephens and Philips's in future, my dear."

"Why? are they much cheaper?"

"Oh, a great deal; but I forget it is Sunday. We ought to be thinking of other things. Boys, have you looked over your Sunday-school lesson?"

"No, ma'am."

"Now, how strange! and here it wants only half an hour of the time, and you are not dressed either. Now, see the bad effects of not being up in time."

The boys looked sullen, and said "they were up as soon as any one else in the house."

"Well, your father and I had some excuse, because we were out late last night; you ought to have been up full three hours ago, and to have been all ready, with your lessons learned. Now, what do you suppose you shall do?"

"Oh, mother, do let us stay at home this one morning; we don't know the lesson, and it won't do any good for us to go."

"No, indeed, I shall not. You must go and get along as well as you can. It is all your own fault. Now, go upstairs and hurry. We shall not find time for prayers this morning."

The boys took themselves upstairs to "hurry," as directed, and soon one of them called from the top of the stairs, "Mother! mother! the buttons are off this vest; so I can't wear it!" and "Mother! here is a long rip in my best coat!" said another.

"Why did you not tell me of it before?" said Mrs. Roberts, coming upstairs.

"I forgot it," said the boy.

"Well, well, stand still; I must catch it together somehow, if it is Sunday. There! there is the bell! Stand still a minute!" and Mrs. Roberts plied needle, and thread, and scissors; "there, that will do for to-day. Dear me, how confused everything is to-day!"

"It is always just so Sundays," said John, flinging up his book and catching it again as he ran downstairs.

"It is always just so Sundays." These words struck rather unpleasantly on Mrs. Roberts's conscience, for something told her that, whatever the reason might be, it *was*

just so. On Sunday everything was later and more irregular than any other day in the week.

"Hannah, you must boil that piece of beef for dinner to-day."

"I thought you told me you did not have cooking done on Sunday."

"No, I do not, generally. I am very sorry Mr. Roberts would get that piece of meat yesterday. We did not need it, but here it is on our hands; the weather is too hot to keep it. It won't do to let it spoil; so I must have it boiled, for aught I see."

Hannah had lived four Sabbaths with Mrs. Roberts, and on two of them she had been required to cook from similar reasoning. "For once" is apt, in such cases, to become a phrase of very extensive signification.

"It really worries me to have things go on so as they do on Sundays," said Mrs. Roberts to her husband. "I never do feel as if we kept Sunday as we ought."

"My dear, you have been saying so ever since we were married, and I do not see what you are going to do about it. For my part I do not see why we do not do as well as people in general. We do not visit, nor receive company, nor read improper books. We go to church, and send the children to Sunday-school, and so the greater part of the day is spent in a religious way. Then out of church we have the children's Sunday-school books, and one or two religious newspapers. I think that is quite enough."

"But, somehow, when I was a child, my mother" — said Mrs. Roberts, hesitating.

"Oh, my dear, your mother must not be considered an exact pattern for these days. People were too strict in your mother's time; they carried the thing too far, altogether; everybody allows it now."

Mrs. Roberts was silenced, but not satisfied. A strict

religious education had left just conscience enough on this subject to make her uneasy.

These worthy people had a sort of general idea that Sunday ought to be kept, and they intended to keep it; but they had never taken the trouble to investigate or inquire as to the most proper way, nor was it so much an object of interest that their weekly arrangements were planned with any reference to it. Mr. Roberts would often engage in business at the close of the week, which he knew would so fatigue him that he would be weary and listless on Sunday; and Mrs. Roberts would allow her family cares to accumulate in the same way, so that she was either wearied with efforts to accomplish it before the Sabbath, or perplexed and worried by finding everything at loose ends on that day. They had the idea that Sunday was to be kept when it was perfectly convenient, and did not demand any sacrifice of time or money. But if stopping to keep the Sabbath in a journey would risk passage money or a seat in the stage, or, in housekeeping, if it would involve any considerable inconvenience or expense, it was deemed a providential intimation that it was "a work of necessity and mercy" to attend to secular matters. To their minds the fourth command read thus: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy when it comes convenient, and costs neither time nor money."

As to the effects of this on the children, there was neither enough of strictness to make them respect the Sabbath, nor of religious interest to make them love it; of course, the little restraint there was proved just enough to lead them to dislike and despise it. Children soon perceive the course of their parents' feelings, and it was evident to the children of this family that their father and mother generally found themselves hurried into the Sabbath with hearts and minds full of this world, and their conversation and thoughts were so constantly turning to worldly things,

and so awkwardly drawn back by a sense of religious obligation, that the Sabbath appeared more obviously a clog and a fetter than it did under the strictest régime of Puritan days.

SKETCH SECOND

The little quiet village of Camden stands under the brow of a rugged hill in one of the most picturesque parts of New England; and its regular, honest, and industrious villagers were not a little surprised and pleased that Mr. James, a rich man, and pleasant-spoken withal, had concluded to take up his residence among them. He brought with him a pretty, genteel wife, and a group of rosy, romping, but amiable children; and there was so much of good nature and kindness about the manners of every member of the family, that the whole neighborhood were prepossessed in their favor. Mr. James was a man of somewhat visionary and theoretical turn of mind, and very much in the habit of following out his own ideas of right and wrong, without troubling himself particularly as to the appearance his course might make in the eyes of others. He was a supporter of the ordinances of religion, and always ready to give both time and money to promote any benevolent object; and though he had never made any public profession of religion, or connected himself with any particular set of Christians, still he seemed to possess great reverence for God, and to worship him in spirit and in truth, and he professed to make the Bible the guide of his life. Mr. James had been brought up under a system of injudicious religious restraint. He had determined, in educating his children, to adopt an exactly opposite course, and to make religion and all its institutions sources of enjoyment. His aim, doubtless, was an appropriate one; but his method of carrying it out, to say the least, was one which was not a safe model for

general imitation. In regard to the Sabbath, for example, he considered that, although the plan of going to church twice a day, and keeping all the family quiet within doors the rest of the time, was good, other methods would be much better. Accordingly, after the morning service, which he and his whole family regularly attended, he would spend the rest of the day with his children. In bad weather he would instruct them in natural history, show them pictures, and read them various accounts of the works of God, combining all with such religious instruction and influence as a devotional mind might furnish. When the weather permitted, he would range with them through the fields, collecting minerals and plants, or sail with them on the lake, meanwhile directing the thoughts of his young listeners upward to God, by the many beautiful traces of his presence and agency, which superior knowledge and observation enabled him to discover and point out. These Sunday strolls were seasons of most delightful enjoyment to the children. Though it was with some difficulty that their father could restrain them from loud and noisy demonstrations of delight, and he saw with some regret that the mere animal excitement of the stroll seemed to draw the attention too much from religious considerations, and, in particular, to make the exercises of the morning seem like a preparatory penance to the enjoyments of the afternoon, nevertheless, when Mr. James looked back to his own boyhood, and remembered the frigid restraint, the entire want of any kind of mental or bodily excitement, which had made the Sabbath so much a weariness to him, he could not but congratulate himself when he perceived his children looking forward to Sunday as a day of delight, and found himself on that day continually surrounded by a circle of smiling and cheerful faces. His talent of imparting religious instruction in a simple and interesting form was remarkably happy, and it is probable that there

was among his children an uncommon degree of real thought and feeling on religious subjects as the result.

The good people of Camden, however, knew not what to think of a course that appeared to them an entire violation of all the requirements of the Sabbath. The first impulse of human nature is to condemn at once all who vary from what has been commonly regarded as the right way; and, accordingly, Mr. James was unsparingly denounced, by many good people, as a Sabbath breaker, and infidel, and an opposer to religion.

Such was the character heard of him by Mr. Richards, a young clergyman, who, shortly after Mr. James fixed his residence in Camden, accepted the pastoral charge of the village. It happened that Mr. Richards had known Mr. James in college, and, remembering him as a remarkably serious, amiable, and conscientious man, he resolved to ascertain from himself the views which had led him to the course of conduct so offensive to the good people of the neighborhood.

"This is all very well, my good friend," said he, after he had listened to Mr. James's eloquent account of his own system of religious instruction, and its effects upon his family, "I do not doubt that this system does very well for yourself and family; but there are other things to be taken into consideration besides personal and family improvement. Do you not know, Mr. James, that the most worthless and careless part of my congregation quote your example as a respectable precedent for allowing their families to violate the order of the Sabbath? You and your children sail about on the lake, with minds and hearts, I doubt not, elevated and tranquilized by its quiet repose; but Ben Dakes, and his idle, profane army of children, consider themselves as doing very much the same thing when they lie lolling about, sunning themselves on its shore, or skipping stones over its surface the whole of a Sunday afternoon."

"Let every one answer to his own conscience," replied Mr. James. "If I keep the Sabbath conscientiously, I am approved of God; if another transgresses his conscience, 'to his own master he standeth or falleth.' I am not responsible for all the abuses that idle or evil-disposed persons may fall into, in consequence of my doing what is right."

"Let me quote an answer from the same chapter," said Mr. Richards. "'Let no man put a stumbling-block, or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way: let not your good be evil spoken of. It is good neither to eat flesh nor drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak.' Now, my good friend, you happen to be endowed with a certain tone of mind which enables you to carry through your mode of keeping the Sabbath with little comparative evil, and much good, so far as your family is concerned; but how many persons in this neighborhood, do you suppose, would succeed equally well if they were to attempt it? If it were the common custom for families to absent themselves from public worship in the afternoon, and to stroll about the fields, or ride, or sail, how many parents, do you suppose, would have the dexterity and talent to check all that was inconsistent with the duties of the day? Is it not your ready command of language, your uncommon tact in simplifying and illustrating, your knowledge of natural history and of Biblical literature, that enable you to accomplish the results that you do? And is there one parent in a hundred that could do the same? Now, just imagine our neighbor, 'Squire Hart, with his ten boys and girls, turned out into the fields on a Sunday afternoon to profit withal: you know he can never finish a sentence without stopping to begin it again half a dozen times. What progress would he make in instructing them? And so of a dozen others I could name along this very street here. Now,

you men of cultivated minds must give your countenance to courses which would be best for society at large, or, as the sentiment was expressed by St. Paul, 'We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, for even Christ pleased not himself.' Think, my dear sir, if our Saviour had gone only on the principle of avoiding what might be injurious to his own improvement, how unsafe his example might have proved to less elevated minds. Doubtless he might have made a Sabbath day fishing excursion an occasion of much elevated and impressive instruction; but, although he declared himself 'Lord of the Sabbath day,' and at liberty to suspend its obligation at his own discretion, yet he never violated the received method of observing it, except in cases where superstitious tradition trenched directly on those interests which the Sabbath was given to promote. He asserted the right to relieve pressing bodily wants, and to administer to the necessities of others on the Sabbath, but beyond that he allowed himself in no deviation from established custom."

Mr. James looked thoughtful. "I have not reflected on the subject in this view," he replied. "But, my dear sir, considering how little of the public services of the Sabbath is on a level with the capacity of younger children, it seems to me almost a pity to take them to church the whole of the day."

"I have thought of that myself," replied Mr. Richards, "and have sometimes thought that, could persons be found to conduct such a thing, it would be desirable to institute a separate service for children, in which the exercises should be particularly adapted to them."

"I should like to be minister to a congregation of children," said Mr. James warmly.

"Well," replied Mr. Richards, "give our good people time to get acquainted with you, and do away the preju-

dices which your extraordinary mode of proceeding has induced, and I think I could easily assemble such a company for you every Sabbath."

After this, much to the surprise of the village, Mr. James and his family were regular attendants at both the services of the Sabbath. Mr. Richards explained to the good people of his congregation the motives which had led their neighbor to the adoption of what, to them, seemed so unchristian a course; and, upon reflection, they came to the perception of the truth, that a man may depart very widely from the received standard of right for other reasons than being an infidel or an opposer of religion. A ready return of cordial feeling was the result; and as Mr. James found himself treated with respect and confidence, he began to feel, notwithstanding his fastidiousness, that there were strong points of congeniality between all real and warm-hearted Christians, however different might be their intellectual culture, and in all simplicity united himself with the little church of Camden. A year from the time of his first residence there, every Sabbath afternoon saw him surrounded by a congregation of young children, for whose benefit he had, at his own expense, provided a room, fitted up with maps, Scriptural pictures, and every convenience for the illustration of Biblical knowledge; and the parents or guardians who from time to time attended their children during these exercises often confessed themselves as much interested and benefited as any of their youthful companions.

SKETCH THIRD

It was near the close of a pleasant Saturday afternoon that I drew up my weary horse in front of a neat little dwelling in the village of N. This, as near as I could gather from description, was the house of my cousin, William Fletcher, the identical rogue of a Bill Fletcher, of

whom we have aforetime spoken. Bill had always been a thriving, push-ahead sort of a character, and during the course of my rambling life I had improved every occasional opportunity of keeping up our early acquaintance. The last time that I returned to my native country, after some years of absence, I heard of him as married and settled in the village of N., where he was conducting a very prosperous course of business, and shortly after received a pressing invitation to visit him at his own home. Now, as I had gathered from experience the fact that it is of very little use to rap one's knuckles off on the front door of a country house without any knocker, I therefore made the best of my way along a little path, bordered with marigolds and balsams, that led to the back part of the dwelling. The sound of a number of childish voices made me stop, and, looking through the bushes, I saw the very image of my Cousin Bill Fletcher, as he used to be twenty years ago; the same bold forehead, the same dark eyes, the same smart, saucy mouth, and the same "who-cares-for-that" toss to his head. "There, now," exclaimed the boy, setting down a pair of shoes that he had been blacking, and arranging them at the head of a long row of all sizes and sorts, from those which might have fitted a two-year-old foot upward, "there, I've blacked every single one of them, and made them shine too, and done it all in twenty minutes; if anybody thinks they can do it quicker than that, I'd just like to have them try; that's all."

"I know they could n't, though," said a fair-haired little girl, who stood admiring the sight, evidently impressed with the utmost reverence for her brother's ability; "and, Bill, I've been putting up all the playthings in the big chest, and I want you to come and turn the lock — the key hurts my fingers."

"Poh! I can turn it easier than that," said the boy, snapping his fingers; "have you got them all in?"

"Yes, all; only I left out the soft bales, and the string of red beads, and the great rag baby for Fanny to play with — you know mother says babies must have their play-things Sunday."

"Oh, to be sure," said the brother very considerately; "babies can't read, you know, as we can, nor hear Bible stories, nor look at pictures." At this moment I stepped forward, for the spell of former times was so powerfully on me, that I was on the very point of springing forward with a "Halloo, there, Bill!" as I used to meet the father in old times; but the look of surprise that greeted my appearance brought me to myself.

"Is your father at home?" said I.

"Father and mother are both gone out; but I guess, sir, they will be home in a few moments: won't you walk in?"

I accepted the invitation, and the little girl showed me into a small and very prettily furnished parlor. There was a piano with music-books on one side of the room, some fine pictures hung about the walls, and a little, neat centre-table was plentifully strewn with books. Besides this, the two recesses on each side of the fireplace contained each a bookcase with a glass locked door.

The little girl offered me a chair, and then lingered a moment, as if she felt some disposition to entertain me if she could only think of something to say; and at last, looking up in my face, she said in a confidential tone, "Mother says she left Willie and me to keep house this afternoon while she was gone, and we are putting up all the things for Sunday, so as to get everything done before she comes home. Willie has gone to put away the play-things, and I 'm going to put up the books." So saying, she opened the doors of one of the bookcases, and began busily carrying the books from the centre-table to deposit them on the shelves, in which employment she was soon

assisted by Willie, who took the matter in hand in a very masterly manner, showing his sister what were and what were not "Sunday books" with the air of a person entirely at home in the business. "Robinson Crusoe" and the many-volumed Peter Parley were put by without hesitation; there was, however, a short demurring over a "North American Review," because Willie said he was sure his father read something one Sunday out of it while Susan averred that he did not commonly read in it, and only read in it then because the piece was something about the Bible; but as nothing could be settled definitively on the point, the review was "laid on the table," like knotty questions in Congress. Then followed a long discussion over an extract book, which, as usual, contained all sorts, both sacred, serious, comic, and profane; and at last Willie, with much gravity, decided to lock it up, on the principle that it was best to be on the safe side, in support of which he appealed to me. I was saved from deciding the question by the entrance of the father and mother. My old friend knew me at once, and presented his pretty wife to me with the same look of exultation with which he used to hold up a string of trout or an uncommonly fine perch of his own catching for my admiration, and then looking round on his fine family of children, two more of which he had brought home with him, seemed to say to me, "There! what do you think of that, now?"

And, in truth, a very pretty sight it was — enough to make any one's old bachelor coat sit very uneasily on him. Indeed, there is nothing that gives one such a startling idea of the tricks that old Father Time has been playing on us, as to meet some boyish or girlish companions with half a dozen or so of thriving children about them. My old friend, I found, was in essence just what the boy had been. There was the same upright bearing, the same con-

fident, cheerful tone to his voice, and the same fire in his eye; only that the hand of manhood had slightly touched some of the lines of his face, giving them a staidness of expression becoming the man and the father.

"Very well, my children," said Mrs. Fletcher, as, after tea, William and Susan finished recounting to her the various matters that they had set in order that afternoon; "I believe now we can say that our week's work is finished, and that we have nothing to do but rest and enjoy ourselves."

"Oh, and papa will show us the pictures in those great books that he brought home for us last Monday, will he not?" said little Robert.

"And, mother, you will tell us some more about Solomon's temple and his palaces, won't you?" said Susan.

"And I should like to know if father has found out the answer to that hard question I gave him last Sunday?" said Willie.

"All will come in good time," said Mrs. Fletcher. "But tell me, my dear children, are you sure that you are quite ready for the Sabbath? You say you have put away the books and the playthings; have you put away, too, all wrong and unkind feelings? Do you feel kindly and pleasantly towards everybody?"

"Yes, mother," said Willie, who appeared to have taken a great part of this speech to himself; "I went over to Tom Walter's this very morning to ask him about that chicken of mine, and he said that he did not mean to hit it, and did not know he had till I told him of it; and so we made all up again, and I am glad I went."

"I am inclined to think, Willie," said his father, "that if everybody would make it a rule to settle up all their differences before Sunday, there would be very few long quarrels and lawsuits. In about half the cases, a quarrel is founded on some misunderstanding that would be got

over in five minutes if one would go directly to the person for explanation."

"I suppose I need not ask you," said Mrs. Fletcher, "whether you have fully learned your Sunday-school lessons?"

"Oh, to be sure," said William. "You know, mother, that Susan and I were busy about them through Monday and Tuesday, and then this afternoon we looked them over again, and wrote down some questions."

"And I heard Robert say his all through, and showed him all the places on the Bible Atlas," said Susan.

"Well, then," said my friend, "if everything is done, let us begin Sunday with some music."

Thanks to the recent improvements in the musical instruction of the young, every family can now form a domestic concert, with words and tunes adapted to the capacity and the voices of children; and while these little ones, full of animation, pressed round their mother as she sat at the piano, and accompanied her music with the words of some beautiful hymns, I thought that, though I might have heard finer music, I had never listened to any that answered the purpose of music so well.

It was a custom at my friend's to retire at an early hour on Saturday evening, in order that there might be abundant time for rest, and no excuse for late rising on the Sabbath; and, accordingly, when the children had done singing, after a short season of family devotion, we all betook ourselves to our chambers, and I, for one, fell asleep with the impression of having finished the week most agreeably, and with anticipations of very great pleasure on the morrow.

Early in the morning I was roused from my sleep by the sound of little voices singing with great animation in the room next to mine, and, listening, I caught the following words: —

"Awake ! awake ! your bed forsake,
To God your praises pay ;
The morning sun is clear and bright;
With joy we hail his cheerful light.
In songs of love
Praise God above —
It is the Sabbath day ! "

The last words were repeated and prolonged most vehemently by a voice that I knew for Master William's.

"Now, Willie, I like the other one best," said the soft voice of little Susan; and immediately she began: —

"How sweet is the day,
When, leaving our play,
The Saviour we seek!
The fair morning glows
When Jesus arose —
The best in the week."

Master William helped along with great spirit in the singing of this tune, though I heard him observing, at the end of the first verse, that he liked the other one better, because "it seemed to step off so kind o' lively;" and his accommodating sister followed him as he began singing it again with redoubled animation.

It was a beautiful summer morning, and the voices of the children within accorded well with the notes of birds and bleating flocks without — a cheerful, yet Sabbath-like and quieting sound.

"Blessed be children's music!" said I to myself; "how much better this is than the solitary tick, tick, of old Uncle Fletcher's tall mahogany clock!"

The family bell summoned us to the breakfast room just as the children had finished their hymn. The little breakfast parlor had been swept and garnished expressly for the day, and a vase of beautiful flowers, which the children had the day before collected from their gardens, adorned the centre-table. The door of one of the bookcases by the fireplace was thrown open, presenting to view a collection of prettily bound books, over the top of which

appeared in gilt letters the inscription, "Sabbath Library." The windows were thrown open to let in the invigorating breath of the early morning, and the birds that flitted among the rose-bushes without seemed scarcely lighter and more buoyant than did the children as they entered the room. It was legibly written on every face in the house, that the happiest day in the week had arrived, and each one seemed to enter into its duties with a whole soul. It was still early when the breakfast and the season of family devotion were over, and the children eagerly gathered round the table to get a sight of the pictures in the new books which their father had purchased in New York the week before, and which had been reserved as a Sunday's treat. They were a beautiful edition of Calmet's Dictionary, in several large volumes, with very superior engravings.

"It seems to me that this work must be very expensive," I remarked to my friend, as we were turning the leaves.

"Indeed it is so," he replied; "but here is one place where I am less withheld by considerations of expense than in any other. In all that concerns making a show in the world, I am perfectly ready to economize. I can do very well without expensive clothing or fashionable furniture, and am willing that we should be looked on as very plain sort of people in all such matters; but in all that relates to the cultivation of the mind, and the improvement of the hearts of my children, I am willing to go to the extent of my ability. Whatever will give my children a better knowledge of, or deeper interest in, the Bible, or enable them to spend a Sabbath profitably and without weariness, stands first on my list among things to be purchased. I have spent in this way one third as much as the furnishing of my house costs me." On looking over the shelves of the Sabbath Library, I perceived that my

friend had been at no small pains in the selection. It comprised all the popular standard works for the illustration of the Bible, together with the best of the modern religious publications adapted to the capacity of young children. Two large drawers below were filled with maps and Scriptural engravings, some of them of a very superior character.

"We have been collecting these things gradually ever since we have been at housekeeping," said my friend; "the children take an interest in this library, as something more particularly belonging to them, and some of the books are donations from their little earnings."

"Yes," said Willie, "I bought Helon's 'Pilgrimage' with my egg money, and Susan bought the 'Life of David,' and little Robert is going to buy one, too, next New Year."

"But," said I, "would not the Sunday-school library answer all the purpose of this?"

"The Sabbath-school library is an admirable thing," said my friend; "but this does more fully and perfectly what that was intended to do. It makes a sort of central attraction at home on the Sabbath, and makes the acquisition of religious knowledge and the proper observance of the Sabbath a sort of family enterprise. You know," he added, smiling, "that people always feel interested for an object in which they have invested money."

The sound of the first Sabbath-school bell put an end to this conversation. The children promptly made themselves ready, and as their father was the superintendent of the school, and their mother one of the teachers, it was quite a family party.

One part of every Sabbath at my friend's was spent by one or both parents with the children in a sort of review of the week. The attention of the little ones was directed to their own characters, the various defects or improvements of the past week were pointed out, and they were stimu-

lated to be on their guard in the time to come, and the whole was closed by earnest prayer for such heavenly aid as the temptations and faults of each particular one might need. After church in the evening, while the children were thus withdrawn to their mother's apartment, I could not forbear reminding my friend of old times, and of the rather anti-sabbatical turn of his mind in our boyish days.

"Now, William," said I, "do you know that you were the last boy of whom such an enterprise in Sabbath-keeping as this was to have been expected? I suppose you remember Sunday at 'the old place'?"

"Nay, now, I think I was the very one," said he, smiling, "for I had sense enough to see, as I grew up, that the day must be kept thoroughly or not at all, and I had enough blood and motion in my composition to see that something must be done to enliven and make it interesting; so I set myself about it. It was one of the first of our housekeeping resolutions, that the Sabbath should be made a pleasant day, and yet be as inviolably kept as in the strictest times of our good father; and we have brought things to run in that channel so long that it seems to be the natural order."

"I have always supposed," said I, "that it required a peculiar talent, and more than common information in a parent, to accomplish this to any extent."

"It requires nothing," replied my friend, "but common sense, and a strong determination to do it. Parents who make a definite object of the religious instruction of their children, if they have common sense, can very soon see what is necessary in order to interest them; and, if they find themselves wanting in the requisite information, they can, in these days, very readily acquire it. The sources of religious knowledge are so numerous, and so popular in their form, that all can avail themselves of them. The only difficulty after all is, that the keeping of the Sabbath

and the imparting of religious instruction are not made enough of a *home* object. Parents pass off the responsibility on to the Sunday-school teacher, and suppose, of course, if they send their children to Sunday-school, they do the best they can for them. Now, I am satisfied, from my experience as a Sabbath-school teacher, that the best religious instruction imparted abroad still stands in need of the coöperation of a systematic plan of religious discipline and instruction at home; for, after all, God gives a power to the efforts of a *parent* that can never be transferred to other hands."

"But do you suppose," said I, "that the *common* class of minds, with ordinary advantages, can do what you have done?"

"I think in most cases they could, if they begin right. But when both parents and children have formed habits, it is more difficult to change than to begin right at first. However, I think all might accomplish a great deal if they would give time, money, and effort towards it. It is because the object is regarded of so little value, compared with other things of a worldly nature, that so little is done."

My friend was here interrupted by the entrance of Mrs. Fletcher with the children. Mrs. Fletcher sat down to the piano, and the Sabbath was closed with the happy songs of the little ones; nor could I notice a single anxious eye turning to the window to see if the sun was not almost down. The tender and softened expression of each countenance bore witness to the subduing power of those instructions which had hallowed the last hour, and their sweet, birdlike voices harmonized well with the beautiful words: —

> "How sweet the light of Sabbath eve!
> How soft the sunbeam lingering there!
> Those holy hours this low earth leave,
> And rise on wings of faith and prayer."

RELIGIOUS POEMS

ST. CATHERINE BORNE BY ANGELS[1]

Slow through the solemn air, in silence sailing,
Borne by mysterious angels, strong and fair,
She sleeps at last, blest dreams her eyelids veiling,
Above this weary world of strife and care.

Lo how she passeth! — dreamy, slow, and calm:
Scarce wave those broad, white wings, so silvery bright;
Those cloudy robes, in star-emblazoned folding,
Sweep mistily athwart the evening light.

Far, far below, the dim, forsaken earth,
The foes that threaten, or the friends that weep;
Past, like a dream, the torture and the pain:
For so He giveth his beloved sleep.

The restless bosom of the surging ocean
Gives back the image as the cloud floats o'er,

[1] According to this legend, Catherine was a noble maiden of Alexandria, distinguished alike by birth, riches, beauty, and the rarest gifts of genius and learning. In the flower of her life she consecrated herself to the service of her Redeemer, and cheerfully suffered for his sake the loss of wealth, friends, and the esteem of the world. Banishment, imprisonment, and torture were in vain tried to shake the constancy of her faith; and at last she was bound upon the torturing-wheel for a cruel death. But the angels descended, so says the story, rent the wheel, and bore her away, through the air, far over the sea, to Mount Sinai, where her body was left to repose, and her soul ascended with them to heaven.

Hushing in glassy awe his troubled motion;
For one blest moment he complains no more.

Like the transparent golden floor of heaven,
His charmèd waters lie as in a dream,
And glistening wings, and starry robes unfolding,
And serious angel eyes far downward gleam.

O restless sea! thou seemest all enchanted
By that sweet vision of celestial rest;
Where are the winds and tides thy peace that haunted, —
So still thou seemest, so glorified and blest!

Ah, sea! to-morrow, that sweet scene forgotten,
Dark tides and tempests shall thy bosom rear;
And thy complaining waves, with restless motion,
Shall toss their hands in their old wild despair.

So o'er our hearts sometimes the sweet, sad story
Of suffering saints, borne homeward crowned and blest,
Shines down in stillness with a tender glory,
And makes a mirror there of breathless rest.

For not alone in those old Eastern regions
Are Christ's beloved ones tried by cross and chain;
In many a house are his elect ones hidden,
His martyrs suffering in their patient pain.

The rack, the cross, life's weary wrench of woe,
The world sees not, as slow, from day to day,
In calm, unspoken patience, sadly still,
The loving spirit bleeds itself away.

But there are hours when, from the heavens unfolding,
Come down the angels with the glad release;

And we look upward, to behold in glory
Our suffering loved ones borne away to peace.

Ah, brief the calm! the restless wave of feeling
Rises again when the bright cloud sweeps by,
And our unrestful souls reflect no longer
That tender vision of the upper sky.

Espousèd Lord of the pure saints in glory,
To whom all faithful souls affianced are,
Breathe down thy peace into our restless spirits,
And make a lasting, heavenly vision there.

So the bright gates no more on us shall close;
No more the cloud of angels fade away;
And we shall walk, amid life's weary strife,
In the calm light of thine eternal day.

THE CHARMER

"*Socrates.* However, you and Simmias appear to me as if you wished to sift this subject more thoroughly, and to be afraid, like children, lest, on the soul's departure from the body, winds should blow it away.

"Upon this Cebes said, 'Endeavor to teach us better, Socrates. Perhaps there is a childish spirit in our breast that has such a dread. Let us endeavor to persuade him not to be afraid of death, as of hobgoblins.'

"'But you must charm him every day,' said Socrates, 'until you have quieted his fears.'

"'But whence, O Socrates,' he said, 'can we procure a skillful charmer for such a case, now you are about to leave us?'

"'Greece is wide, Cebes,' he said, 'and in it surely there are skillful men; and there are many barbarous nations, all of which you should search, seeking such a charmer, sparing neither money nor toil.'"—Last words of Socrates, as narrated by Plato in the *Phædo.*

We need that charmer, for our hearts are sore
With longings for the things that may not be,
Faint for the friends that shall return no more,
Dark with distrust, or wrung with agony.

"What is this life? and what to us is death?
Whence came we? whither go? and where are those
Who, in a moment stricken from our side,
Passed to that land of shadow and repose?

"And are they all dust? and dust must we become?
Or are they living in some unknown clime?
Shall we regain them in that far-off home,
And live anew beyond the waves of time?

"O man divine! on thee our souls have hung;
Thou wert our teacher in these questions high;
But ah! this day divides thee from our side,
And veils in dust thy kindly guiding eye.

"Where is that Charmer whom thou bidst us seek?
On what far shores may his sweet voice be heard?
When shall these questions of our yearning souls
Be answered by the bright Eternal Word?"

So spake the youth of Athens, weeping round,
When Socrates lay calmly down to die;
So spake the sage, prophetic of the hour
When earth's fair morning star should rise on high.

They found Him not, those youths of soul divine,
Long seeking, wandering, watching on life's shore;
Reasoning, aspiring, yearning for the light,
Death came and found them — doubting as before.

But years passed on; and lo! the Charmer came,
Pure, simple, sweet, as comes the silver dew,
And the world knew him not, — he walked alone
Encircled only by his trusting few.

Like the Athenian sage, rejected, scorned,
Betrayed, condemned, his day of doom drew nigh;
He drew his faithful few more closely round,
And told them that his hour was come — to die.

"Let not your heart be troubled," then He said,
"My Father's house hath mansions large and fair;
I go before you to prepare your place,
I will return to take you with me there."

And since that hour the awful foe is charmed,
And life and death are glorified and fair;
Whither He went we know, the way we know,
And with firm step press on to meet him there.

KNOCKING

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Knocking, knocking, ever knocking ?
Who is there ?
'T is a pilgrim, strange and kingly,
Never such was seen before ; —
Ah, sweet soul, for such a wonder
Undo the door.

No, — that door is hard to open ;
Hinges rusty, latch is broken ;
Bid Him go.
Wherefore, with that knocking dreary
Scare the sleep from one so weary ?
Say Him, — no.

Knocking, knocking, ever knocking ?
What ! Still there ?
O sweet soul, but once behold Him,
With the glory-crownèd hair ;
And those eyes, so strange and tender,
Waiting there ;
Open ! Open ! Once behold Him, —
Him, so fair.

Ah, that door ! Why wilt Thou vex me,
Coming ever to perplex me ?
For the key is stiffly rusty,

And the bolt is clogged and dusty;
Many-fingered ivy-vine
Seals it fast with twist and twine;
Weeds of years and years before
Choke the passage of that door.

Knocking! knocking! What! still knocking?
He still there?
What 's the hour? The night is waning, —
In my heart a drear complaining,
And a chilly, sad unrest!
Ah, this knocking! It disturbs me,
Scares my sleep with dreams unblest!
Give me rest,
Rest, — ah, rest!

Rest, dear soul, He longs to give thee;
Thou hast only dreamed of pleasure,
Dreamed of gifts and golden treasure,
Dreamed of jewels in thy keeping,
Waked to weariness of weeping; —
Open to thy soul's one Lover,
And thy night of dreams is over, —
The true gifts He brings have seeming
More than all thy faded dreaming!

Did she open? Doth she? Will she?
So, as wondering we behold,
Grows the picture to a sign,
Pressed upon your soul and mine;
For in every breast that liveth
Is that strange, mysterious door; —
Though forsaken and betangled,
Ivy-gnarled and weed-bejangled,
Dusty, rusty, and forgotten; —

There the pierced hand still knocketh,
And with ever-patient watching,
With the sad eyes true and tender,
With the glory-crowned hair, —
Still a God is waiting there.

THE OLD PSALM TUNE

You asked, dear friend, the other day,
Why still my charmèd ear
Rejoiceth in uncultured tone
That old psalm tune to hear ?

I 've heard full oft, in foreign lands,
The grand orchestral strain,
Where music's ancient masters live,
Revealed on earth again, —

Where breathing, solemn instruments,
In swaying clouds of sound,
Bore up the yearning, trancèd soul,
Like silver wings around ; —

I've heard in old St. Peter's dome,
Where clouds of incense rise,
Most ravishing the choral swell
Mount upwards to the skies.

And well I feel the magic power,
When skilled and cultured art
Its cunning webs of sweetness weaves
Around the captured heart.

But yet, dear friend, though rudely sung,
That old psalm tune hath still
A pulse of power beyond them all
My inmost soul to thrill.

Those halting tones that sound to you,
Are not the tones I hear;
But voices of the loved and lost
There meet my longing ear.

I hear my angel mother's voice, —
Those were the words she sung;
I hear my brother's ringing tones,
As once on earth they rung;

And friends that walk in white above
Come round me like a cloud,
And far above those earthly notes
Their singing sounds aloud.

There may be discord, as you say;
Those voices poorly ring;
But there 's no discord in the strain
Those upper spirits sing.

For they who sing are of the blest,
The calm and glorified,
Whose hours are one eternal rest
On heaven's sweet floating tide.

Their life is music and accord;
Their souls and hearts keep time
In one sweet concert with the Lord, —
One concert vast, sublime.

And through the hymns they sang on earth
Sometimes a sweetness falls
On those they loved and left below,
And softly homeward calls, —

Bells from our own dear fatherland,
Borne trembling o'er the sea, —
The narrow sea that they have crossed,
The shores where we shall be.

O sing, sing on, belovèd souls!
Sing cares and griefs to rest;
Sing, till entrancèd we arise
To join you 'mong the blest

THE OTHER WORLD

It lies around us like a cloud,
A world we do not see ;
Yet the sweet closing of an eye
May bring us there to be.

Its gentle breezes fan our cheek ;
Amid our worldly cares,
Its gentle voices whisper love,
And mingle with our prayers.

Sweet hearts around us throb and beat,
Sweet helping hands are stirred,
And palpitates the veil between
With breathings almost heard.

The silence, awful, sweet, and calm,
They have no power to break ;
For mortal words are not for them
To utter or partake.

So thin, so soft, so sweet, they glide,
So near to press they seem,
They lull us gently to our rest,
They melt into our dream.

And in the hush of rest they bring
'T is easy now to see
How lovely and how sweet a pass
The hour of death may be ; —

To close the eye, and close the ear,
  Wrapped in a trance of bliss,
And, gently drawn in loving arms,
  To swoon to that — from this, —

Scarce knowing if we wake or sleep,
  Scarce asking where we are,
To feel all evil sink away,
  All sorrow and all care.

Sweet souls around us! watch us still;
  Press nearer to our side;
Into our thoughts, into our prayers,
  With gentle helpings glide.

Let death between us be as naught,
  A dried and vanished stream;
Your joy be the reality,
  Our suffering life the dream.

MARY AT THE CROSS

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother."

O WONDROUS mother! since the dawn of time
  Was ever love, was ever grief, like thine?
O highly favored in thy joy's deep flow,
  And favored, even in this, thy bitterest woe!

Poor was that home in simple Nazareth
  Where, fairly growing, like some silent flower,
Last of a kingly race, unknown and lowly,
  O desert lily, passed thy childhood's hour.

The world knew not the tender, serious maiden,
  Who through deep loving years so silent grew,
Full of high thought and holy aspiration,
  Which the o'ershadowing God alone might view.

And then it came, that message from the highest,
  Such as to woman ne'er before descended,
The almighty wings thy prayerful soul o'erspread,
  And with thy life the Life of worlds was blended.

What visions then of future glory filled thee,
  The chosen mother of that King unknown,
Mother fulfiller of all prophecy
  Which, through dim ages, wondering seers had shown!

Well did thy dark eye kindle, thy deep soul
  Rise into billows, and thy heart rejoice;

Then woke the poet's fire, the prophet's song,
Tuned with strange burning words thy timid voice.

Then, in dark contrast, came the lowly manger,
The outcast shed, the tramp of brutal feet;
Again behold earth's learnèd and her lowly,
Sages and shepherds, prostrate at thy feet.

Then to the temple bearing — hark again
What strange conflicting tones of prophecy
Breathe o'er the child foreshadowing words of joy,
High triumph blent with bitter agony!

O highly favored thou in many an hour
Spent in lone musings with thy wondrous Son,
When thou didst gaze into that glorious eye,
And hold that mighty hand within thine own.

Blest through those thirty years, when in thy dwelling
He lived a God disguised with unknown power;
And thou his sole adorer, his best love,
Trusting, revering, waited for his hour.

Blest in that hour, when called by opening heaven
With cloud and voice, and the baptizing flame,
Up from the Jordan walked th' acknowledged stranger,
And awe-struck crowds grew silent as He came.

Blessèd, when full of grace, with glory crowned,
He from both hands almighty favors poured,
And, though He had not where to lay his head,
Brought to his feet alike the slave and lord.

Crowds followed; thousands shouted, "Lo, our King!"
Fast beat thy heart. Now, now the hour draws nigh:
Behold the crown, the throne, the nations bend!
Ah, no! fond mother, no! behold Him die!

Now by that cross thou tak'st thy final station,
And shar'st the last dark trial of thy Son;
Not with weak tears or woman's lamentation,
But with high, silent anguish, like his own.

Hail! highly favored, even in this deep passion;
Hail! in this bitter anguish thou art blest, —
Blest in the holy power with Him to suffer
Those deep death-pangs that lead to higher rest.

All now is darkness; and in that deep stillness
The God-man wrestles with that mighty woe;
Hark to that cry, the rock of ages rending, —
"'T is finished!" Mother, all is glory now!

By sufferings mighty as his mighty soul
Hath the Redeemer risen forever blest;
And through all ages must his heart-belovèd
Through the same baptism enter the same rest.

THE INNER VOICE

"Come ye yourselves into a desert place and rest awhile ; for there were many coming and going, so that they had no time so much as to eat."

'Mid the mad whirl of life, its dim confusion,
Its jarring discords and poor vanity,
Breathing like music over troubled waters,
What gentle voice, O Christian, speaks to thee ?

It is a stranger, — not of earth or earthly ;
By the serene, deep fullness of that eye, —
By the calm, pitying smile, the gesture lowly, —
It is thy Saviour as He passeth by.

"Come, come," He saith, "O soul oppressed and weary,
Come to the shadows of my desert rest,
Come walk with me far from life's babbling discords,
And peace shall breathe like music in thy breast.

"Art thou bewildered by contesting voices, —
Sick to thy soul of party noise and strife ?
Come, leave it all, and seek that solitude
Where thou shalt learn of me a purer life.

"When far behind the world's great tumult dieth,
Thou shalt look back and wonder at its roar ;
But its far voice shall seem to thee a dream,
Its power to vex thy holier life be o'er.

"There shalt thou learn the secret of a power,
Mine to bestow, which heals the ills of living;
To overcome by love, to live by prayer,
To conquer man's worst evils by forgiving."

ABIDE IN ME, AND I IN YOU

THE SOUL'S ANSWER

THAT mystic word of thine, O sovereign Lord,
Is all too pure, too high, too deep for me;
Weary of striving, and with longing faint,
I breathe it back again in *prayer* to thee.

Abide in me, I pray, and I in thee;
From this good hour, O leave me nevermore;
Then shall the discord cease, the wound be healed,
The lifelong bleeding of the soul be o'er.

Abide in me; o'ershadow by thy love
Each half-formed purpose and dark thought of sin;
Quench, e'er it rise, each selfish, low desire,
And keep my soul as thine, calm and divine.

As some rare perfume in a vase of clay
Pervades it with a fragrance not its own,
So, when thou dwellest in a mortal soul,
All heaven's own sweetness seems around it thrown.

Abide in me: there have been moments blest
When I have heard thy voice and felt thy power;
Then evil lost its grasp, and passion, hushed,
Owned the divine enchantment of the hour.

These were but seasons, beautiful and rare;
Abide in me, and they shall ever be.
Fulfill at once thy precept and my prayer, —
Come, and abide in me, and I in thee.

THE SECRET

"Thou shalt keep them in the secret of thy presence from the strife of tongues."

When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'T is said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.

Far, far beneath, the noise of tempest dieth,
And silver waves chime ever peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er he flieth,
Disturbs the sabbath of that deeper sea.

So to the soul that knows thy love, O Purest,
There is a temple peaceful evermore!
And all the babble of life's angry voices
Die in hushed stillness at its sacred door.

Far, far away the noise of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise ever peacefully;
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er he flieth,
Disturbs that deeper rest, O Lord, in thee.

O rest of rests! O peace serene, eternal!
Thou ever livest and thou changest never;
And in the secret of thy presence dwelleth
Fullness of joy, forever and forever.

THINK NOT ALL IS OVER

THINK not, when the wailing winds of autumn
Drive the shivering leaflets from the tree, —
Think not all is over: spring returneth,
Buds and leaves and blossoms thou shalt see.

Think not, when the Earth lies cold and sealèd,
And the weary birds above her mourn, —
Think not all is over: God still liveth,
Songs and sunshine shall again return.

Think not, when thy heart is waste and dreary,
When thy cherished hopes lie chill and sere, —
Think not all is over: God still loveth,
He will wipe away thy every tear.

Weeping for a night alone endureth,
God at last shall bring a morning hour;
In the frozen buds of every winter
Sleep the blossoms of a future flower.

LINES

TO THE MEMORY OF "ANNIE," WHO DIED AT MILAN, JUNE 6, 1860

"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him." — JOHN XX. 15.

In the fair garden of celestial peace
Walketh a Gardener in meekness clad;
Fair are the flowers that wreathe his dewy locks,
And his mysterious eyes are sweet and sad.

Fair are the silent foldings of his robes,
Falling with saintly calmness to his feet;
And when he walks, each floweret to his will
With living pulse of sweet accord doth beat.

Every green leaf thrills to its tender heart,
In the mild summer radiance of his eye;
No fear of storm, or cold, or bitter frost,
Shadows the flowerets when their sun is nigh.

And all our pleasant haunts of earthly love
Are nurseries to those gardens of the air;
And his far-darting eye, with starry beam,
Watcheth the growing of his treasures there.

We call them ours, o'erwept with selfish tears,
O'erwatched with restless longings night and day;

Forgetful of the high, mysterious right
He holds to bear our cherished plants away.

But when some sunny spot in those bright fields
Needs the fair presence of an added flower,
Down sweeps a starry angel in the night:
At morn, the rose has vanished from our bower.

Where stood our tree, our flower, there is a grave!
Blank, silent, vacant, but in worlds above,
Like a new star outblossomed in the skies,
The angels hail an added flower of love.

Dear friend, no more upon that lonely mound,
Strewed with the red and yellow autumn leaf,
Drop thou the tear, but raise the fainting eye
Beyond the autumn mists of earthly grief.

Thy garden rosebud bore, within its breast,
Those mysteries of color, warm and bright,
That the bleak climate of this lower sphere
Could never waken into form and light.

Yes, the sweet Gardener hath borne her hence,
Nor must thou ask to take her thence away;
Thou shalt behold her in some coming hour,
Full-blossomed in his fields of cloudless day.

THE CROCUS

Beneath the sunny autumn sky,
With gold leaves dropping round,
We sought, my little friend and I,
The consecrated ground,
Where, calm beneath the holy cross,
O'ershadowed by sweet skies,
Sleeps tranquilly that youthful form,
Those blue unclouded eyes.

Around the soft, green swelling mound
We scooped the earth away,
And buried deep the crocus-bulbs
Against a coming day.
"These roots are dry, and brown, and sere;
Why plant them here?" he said,
"To leave them, all the winter long,
So desolate and dead."

"Dear child, within each sere dead form
There sleeps a living flower,
And angel-like it shall arise
In spring's returning hour."
Ah, deeper down — cold, dark, and chill —
We buried our heart's flower,
But angel-like shall he arise
In spring's immortal hour.

In blue and yellow from its grave
Springs up the crocus fair,

And God shall raise those bright blue eyes,
Those sunny waves of hair.
Not for a fading summer's morn,
Not for a fleeting hour,
But for an endless age of bliss,
Shall rise our heart's dear flower.

CONSOLATION

WRITTEN AFTER THE SECOND BATTLE OF BULL RUN

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea."

Ah, many-voiced and angry ! how the waves
Beat turbulent with terrible uproar !
Is there no rest from tossing, — no repose ?
Where shall we find a haven and a shore ?

What is secure from the land-dashing wave ?
There go our riches, and our hopes fly there ;
There go the faces of our best beloved,
Whelmed in the vortex of its wild despair.

Whose son is safe ? whose brother, and whose home ?
The dashing spray beats out the household fire ;
By blackened ashes weep our widowed souls
Over the embers of our lost desire.

By pauses, in the fitful moaning storm,
We hear triumphant notes of battle roll.
Too soon the triumph sinks in funeral wail ;
The muffled drum, the death march, shakes the soul !

Rocks on all sides, and breakers ! at the helm
Weak human hand and weary human eyes.
The shout and clamor of our dreary strife
Goes up conflicting to the angry skies.

But for all this, O timid hearts, be strong;
Be of good cheer, for, though the storm must be,
It hath its Master: from the depths shall rise
New heavens, new earth, where shall be no more sea.

No sea, no tossing, no unrestful storm!
Forever past the anguish and the strife;
The poor old weary earth shall bloom again,
With the bright foliage of that better life.

And war, and strife, and hatred, shall be past,
And misery be a forgotten dream.
The Shepherd God shall lead his peaceful fold
By the calm meadows and the quiet stream.

Be still, be still, and know that he is God;
Be calm, be trustful; work, and watch, and pray,
Till from the throes of this last anguish rise
The light and gladness of that better day.

"ONLY A YEAR"

One year ago, — a ringing voice,
A clear blue eye,
And clustering curls of sunny hair,
Too fair to die.

Only a year, — no voice, no smile,
No glance of eye,
No clustering curls of golden hair,
Fair but to die!

One year ago, — what loves, what schemes
Far into life!
What joyous hopes, what high resolves,
What generous strife!

The silent picture on the wall,
The burial stone,
Of all that beauty, life, and joy
Remain alone!

One year, — one year, — one little year,
And so much gone!
And yet the even flow of life
Moves calmly on.

The grave grows green, the flowers bloom fair,
Above that head;
No sorrowing tint of leaf or spray
Says he is dead.

No pause or hush of merry birds,
That sing above,
Tells us how coldly sleeps below
The form we love.

Where hast thou been this year, beloved?
What hast thou seen?
What visions fair, what glorious life,
Where thou hast been?

The veil! the veil! so thin, so strong!
'Twixt us and thee;
The mystic veil! when shall it fall,
That we may see?

Not dead, not sleeping, not even gone,
But present still,
And waiting for the coming hour
Of God's sweet will.

Lord of the living and the dead,
Our Saviour dear!
We lay in silence at thy feet
This sad, sad year!

BELOW

Loudly sweep the winds of autumn
O'er that lone, belovèd grave,
Where we laid those sunny ringlets,
When those blue eyes set like stars,
Leaving us to outer darkness.
O the longing and the aching!
O the sere deserted grave!

Let the grass turn brown upon thee,
Brown and withered like our dreams!
Let the wind moan through the pine-trees
With a dreary, dirge-like whistle,
Sweep the dead leaves on its bosom, —
Moaning, sobbing through the branches,
Where the summer laughed so gayly.

He is gone, our boy of summer, —
Gone the light of his blue eyes,
Gone the tender heart and manly,
Gone the dreams and the aspirings, —
Nothing but the *mound* remaineth,
And the aching in our bosoms,
Ever aching, ever throbbing:
Who shall bring it unto rest?

ABOVE

A VISION

Coming down a golden street
I beheld my vanished one,
And he moveth on a cloud,
And his forehead wears a star;
And his blue eyes, deep and holy,
Fixed as in a blessèd dream,
See some mystery of joy,
Some unuttered depth of love.

And his vesture is as blue
As the skies of summer are,
Falling with a saintly sweep,
With a sacred stillness swaying;
And he presseth to his bosom
Harps of strange and mystic fashion,
And his hands, like living pearls,
Wander o'er the golden strings.

And the music that ariseth,
Who can utter or divine it?
In that strange celestial thrilling,
Every memory of sorrow,
Every heart-ache, every anguish,
Every fear for the to-morrow,
Melt away in charmèd rest.

And there be around him many,
Bright with robes like evening clouds, —

Tender green and clearest amber,
Crimson fading into rose,
Robes of flames and robes of silver, —
And their hues all thrill and tremble
With a living light of feeling,
Deepening with each heart's pulsation,
Till in vivid trance of color
That celestial rainbow glows.

How they float and wreathe and brighten,
Bending low their starry brows,
Singing with a tender cadence,
And their hands, like spotless lilies,
Folded on their prayerful breasts.
In their singing seem to mingle
Tender airs of bygone days; —
Mother-hymnings by the cradle,
Mother-moanings by the grave,
Songs of human love and sorrow,
Songs of endless love and rest; —
In the pauses of that music
Every throb of sorrow dies.

O my own, my heart's belovèd,
Vainly have I wept above thee ?
Would I call thee from thy glory
To this world's impurity ? —
Lo ! it passeth, it dissolveth,
All the vision melts away ;
But as if a heavenly lily
Dropped into my aching breast,
With a healing sweetness laden,
With a mystic breath of rest,
I am charmed into forgetting
Autumn winds and dreary grave.

LINES

SUGGESTED BY THE DEATH OF THE WIFE OF MOSES STUART, OF ANDOVER, MASS.

How quiet, through the hazy autumn air,
The elm-boughs wave with many a gold-flecked leaf!
How calmly float the dreamy mantled clouds
Through these still days of autumn, fair and brief!

Our Andover stands thoughtful, fair, and calm,
Waiting to lay her summer glories by
E'er the bright flush shall kindle all her pines,
And her woods blaze with autumn's heraldry.

By the old mossy wall the goldenrod
Waves as aforetime, and the purple sprays
Of starry asters quiver to the breeze,
Rustling all stilly through the forest ways.

No voice of triumph from those silent skies
Breaks on the calm, and speaks of glories near,
Nor bright wings flutter, nor fair glistening robes
Proclaim that heavenly messengers are here.

Yet in our midst an angel hath come down,
Troubling the waters in a peaceful home;
And from that home, of life's long sickness healed,
A saint hath risen, where pain no more may come.

Christ's fair elect one, from a hidden life
Of loving deeds and words of gentleness,
Hath passed where all are loving and beloved,
Beyond all weariness and all distress.

Calm, like a lamb in shepherd's bosom borne,
Quiet and trustful hath she sunk to rest;
God breathed in tenderness the sweet "Well done!"
That scarce awoke a trance so still and blest.

Ye who remember the long loving years,
The patient mother's hourly martyrdom,
The self-renouncing wisdom, the calm trust,
Rejoice for her whose day of rest is come!

Father and mother, now united, stand
Waiting for you to bind the household chain;
The tent is struck, the home is gone before,
And tarries for you on the heavenly plain.

By every wish repressed and hope resigned,
Each cross accepted and each sorrow borne,
She dead yet speaketh, she doth beckon you
To tread the path her patient feet have worn.

Each year that world grows richer and more dear
With the bright freight washed from life's stormy shore;
O goodly clime, how lovely is thy strand,
With those dear faces seen on earth no more!

The veil between this world and that to come
Grows tremulous and quivers with their breath;
Dimly we hear their voices, see their hands,
Inviting us to the release of death.

O Thou, in whom thy saints above, below,
Are one and undivided, grant us grace
In patience yet to bear our daily cross, —
In patience run our hourly shortening race!

And while on earth we wear the servant's form,
And while life's labors ever toilful be,
Breathe in our souls the joyful confidence
We are already kings and priests with thee.

SUMMER STUDIES

Why shouldst thou study in the month of June
In dusky books of Greek and Hebrew lore,
When the Great Teacher of all glorious things
Passes in hourly light before thy door?

There is a brighter book unrolling now;
Fair are its leaves as is the tree of heaven,
All veined and dewed and gemmed with wondrous signs,
To which a healing mystic power is given.

A thousand voices to its study call,
From the fair hilltop, from the waterfall,
Where the bird singeth, and the yellow bee,
And the breeze talketh from the airy tree.

Now is that glorious resurrection time
When all earth's buried beauties have new birth:
Behold the yearly miracle complete, —
God hath created a new heaven and earth!

No tree that wants its joyful garments now,
No flower but hastes his bravery to don;
God bids thee to this marriage feast of joy,
Let thy soul put the wedding garment on.

All fringed with festal gold the barberry stands;
The ferns, exultant, clap their new-made wings;
The hemlock rustles broideries of fresh green,
And thousand bells of pearl the blueberry rings.

The long, weird fingers of the old white-pines
Do beckon thee into the flickering wood,
Where moving spots of light show mystic flowers,
And wavering music fills the dreamy hours.

Hast thou no *time* for all this wondrous show, —
No thought to spare ? Wilt thou forever be
With thy last year's dry flower-stalk and dead leaves,
And no new shoot or blossom on thy tree ?

See how the pines push off their last year's leaves,
And stretch beyond them with exultant bound :
The grass and flowers, with living power, o'ergrow
Their last year's remnants on the greening ground.

Wilt thou, then, all thy wintry feelings keep,
The old dead routine of thy book-writ lore,
Nor deem that God can teach, by one bright hour,
What life hath never taught to thee before ?

See what vast leisure, what unbounded rest,
Lie in the bending dome of the blue sky :
Ah ! breathe that life-born languor from thy breast,
And know once more a child's unreasoning joy.

Cease, cease to *think*, and be content *to be ;*
Swing safe at anchor in fair Nature's bay ;
Reason no more, but o'er thy quiet soul
Let God's sweet teachings ripple their soft way.

Soar with the birds, and flutter with the leaf ;
Dance with the seeded grass in fringy play ;
Sail with the cloud, wave with the dreaming pine,
And float with Nature all the livelong day.

Call not such hours an idle waste of time, —
Land that lies fallow gains a quiet power;
It treasures, from the brooding of God's wings,
Strength to unfold the future tree and flower.

And when the summer's glorious show is past,
Its miracles no longer charm thy sight,
The treasured riches of those thoughtful hours
Shall make thy wintry musings warm and bright.

THE SHEPHERDS' CAROL

"O Shepherd of Israel,
Thy lost flock are straying;
Our Helper, our Saviour,
How long thy delaying!
Where, Lord, is thy promise
To David of old,
Of the King and the Shepherd
To gather the fold!

"Cold, cold is the night wind,
Our hearts have no cheer,
Our Lord and our Leader,
When wilt thou appear?"
So sang the sad shepherds
On Bethlehem's cold ground
When lo, the bright angels
In glory around!

"Peace, peace, ye dear shepherds,
And be of good cheer;
The Lord whom ye long for
Is coming — is here!
In the city of David
Behold him appear —
A babe in a manger —
Go worship him there."

They went and were blessèd.
Dear soul, go thou too;

The Saviour for them
  Is the Saviour for you.
Oh, kneel by the manger,
  Oh, kneel by the cross;
Accept him, believe him, —
  All else is but dross.

HOURS OF THE NIGHT

OR

WATCHES OF SORROW

I

MIDNIGHT

"He hath made me to dwell in darkness as those that have been long dead."

All dark! — no light, no ray!
Sun, moon, and stars, all gone!
Dimness of anguish! — utter void! —
Crushed, and alone!

One waste of weary pain,
One dull, unmeaning ache,
A heart too weary even to throb,
Too bruised to break.

No longer anxious thoughts,
No longer hopes and fears,
No strife, no effort, no desire,
No tears.

Daylight and leaves and flowers,
Summer and song of bird! —
All vanished! — dreams forever gone,
Unseen, unheard!

Love, beauty, youth, — all gone!
The high, heroic vow,
The buoyant hope, the fond desire, —
All ashes now!

The words they speak to me
Far off and distant seem,
As voices we have known and loved
Speak in a dream.

They bid me to submit;
I do, — I cannot strive;
I do not question, — I endure,
Endure and live.

I do not struggle more,
Nor pray, for prayer is vain;
I but lie still the weary hour,
And bear my pain.

A guiding God, a Friend,
A Father's gracious cheer,
Once seemed my own; but now even faith
Lies buried here.

This darkened, deathly life
Is all remains of me,
And but one conscious wish, —
To cease to be!

II

FIRST HOUR

"There was darkness over all the land from the sixth hour unto the ninth hour.

"And Jesus cried and said, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

THAT cry hath stirred the deadness of my soul;
I feel a heart-string throb, as throbs a chord
When breaks the master chord of some great harp;
My heart responsive answers, "Why?" O Lord.

O cross of pain! O crown of cruel thorns!
O piercing nails! O spotless Sufferer there!
Wert *thou* forsaken in thy deadly strife?
Then canst thou pity me in my despair.

Take my dead heart, O Jesus, down with thee
To that still sepulchre where thou didst rest;
Lay it in the fair linen's spicy folds,
As a dear mother lays her babe to rest.

I am so worn, so weary, so o'erspent,
To lie with thee in that calm trance were sweet;
The bitter myrrh of long-remembered pain
May work in me new strength to rise again.

This dark and weary mystery of woe,
This hopeless struggle, this most useless strife, —
Ah, let it end! I die with thee, my Lord,
To all I ever hoped or wished from life.

I die with thee : thy fellowship of grief,
Thy partnership with mortal misery,
The weary watching and the nameless dread, —
Let them be mine to make me one with thee.

Thou hast asked, " Why ? " and God will answer thee,
Therefore I ask not, but in peace lie down,
For the three days of mystery and rest,
Till comes the resurrection and the crown.

III

SECOND HOUR

"They laid hold upon one Simon a Cyrenian, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus."

Along the dusty thoroughfare of life,
Upon his daily errands walking free,
Came a brave, honest man, untouched by pain,
Unchilled by sight or thought of misery.

But lo! a crowd: — he stops, — with curious eye
A fainting form all pressed to earth he sees;
The hard, rough burden of the bitter cross
Hath bowed the drooping head and feeble knees.

Ho! lay the cross upon yon stranger there,
For he hath breadth of chest and strength of limb.
Straight it is done; and heavy laden thus,
With Jesus' cross, he turns and follows him.

Unmurmuring, patient, cheerful, pitiful,
Prompt with the holy sufferer to endure,
Forsaking all to follow the dear Lord, —
Thus did he make his glorious calling sure.

O soul, whoe'er thou art, walking life's way,
As yet from touch of deadly sorrow free,
Learn from this story to forecast the day
When Jesus and his cross shall come to thee.

O in that fearful, that decisive hour,
Rebel not, shrink not, seek not thence to flee,
But, humbly bending, take thy heavy load,
And bear it after Jesus patiently.

His cross is thine. If thou and he be one,
Some portion of his pain must still be thine;
Thus only mayst thou share his glorious crown,
And reign with him in majesty divine.

Master in sorrow! I accept my share
In the great anguish of life's mystery.
No more, alone, I sink beneath my load,
But bear my cross, O Jesus, after thee.

IV

THIRD HOUR

THE MYSTERY OF LIFE

"Let my heart calm itself in thee. Let the great sea of my heart, that swelleth with waves, calm itself in thee." — ST. AUGUSTINE'S MANUAL.

LIFE'S mystery — deep, restless as the ocean —
Hath surged and wailed for ages to and fro;
Earth's generations watch its ceaseless motion,
As in and out its hollow moanings flow.
Shivering and yearning by that unknown sea,
Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in thee!

Life's sorrows, with inexorable power,
Sweep desolation o'er this mortal plain;
And human loves and hopes fly as the chaff
Borne by the whirlwind from the ripened grain.
Ah! when before that blast my hopes all flee,
Let my soul calm itself, O Christ, in thee!

Between the mysteries of death and life
Thou standest, loving, guiding, not explaining;
We ask, and thou art silent; yet we gaze,
And our charmed hearts forget their drear complaining.
No crushing fate, no stony destiny,
O Lamb that hast been slain, we find in thee!

The many waves of thought, the mighty tides,
The ground-swell that rolls up from other lands,

From far-off worlds, from dim, eternal shores,
Whose echo dashes on life's wave-worn strands,
This vague, dark tumult of the inner sea
Grows calm, grows bright, O risen Lord, in thee!

Thy piercèd hand guides the mysterious wheels;
Thy thorn-crowned brow now wears the crown of power;
And when the dread enigma presseth sore,
Thy patient voice saith, "Watch with me one hour."
As sinks the moaning river in the sea
In silver peace, so sinks my soul in thee!

V

FOURTH HOUR

THE SORROWS OF MARY

DEDICATED TO THE MOTHERS WHO HAVE LOST SONS IN THE LATE WAR

I SLEPT, but my heart was waking,
And out in my dreams I sped,
Through the streets of an ancient city,
Where Jesus, the Lord, lay dead.

He was lying all cold and lowly,
And the sepulchre was sealed,
And the women that bore the spices
Had come from the holy field.

There is feasting in Pilate's palace,
There is revel in Herod's hall,
Where the lute and the sounding instrument
To mirth and merriment call.

"I have washed my hands," said Pilate,
"And what is the Jew to me?"
"I have missed my chance," said Herod,
"One of his wonders to see.

"But why should our courtly circle
To the thought give further place?
All dreams, save of pleasure and beauty,
Bid the dancers' feet efface."

. . . . . .

I saw a light from a casement,
And entered a lowly door,
Where a woman, stricken and mournful,
Sat in sackcloth on the floor.

There Mary, the mother of Jesus,
And John, the belovèd one,
With a few poor friends beside them,
Were mourning for Him that was gone.

And before the mother was lying
That crown of cruel thorn,
Wherewith they crowned that gentle brow
In mockery that morn.

And her ears yet ring with the anguish
Of that last dying cry, —
That mighty appeal of agony
That shook both earth and sky.

O God, what a shaft of anguish
Was that dying voice from the tree! —
From Him the only spotless, —
"Why hast Thou forsaken me?"

And was he of God forsaken?
They ask, appalled with dread;
Is evil crowned and triumphant,
And goodness vanquished and dead?

Is there, then, no God in Jacob?
Is the star of Judah dim?
For who would our God deliver,
If he would not deliver him?

If God *could* not deliver, — what hope then?
If he *would* not, — who ever shall dare
To be firm in his service hereafter?
To trust in his wisdom or care?

So darkly the Tempter was saying,
To hearts that with sorrow were dumb;
And the poor souls were clinging in darkness to God,
With hands that with anguish were numb.

. . . . . .

In my dreams came the third day morning,
And fairly the day-star shone;
But fairer, the solemn angel,
As he rolled away the stone.

In the lowly dwelling of Mary,
In the dusky twilight chill,
There was heard the sound of coming feet,
And her very heart grew still.

And in the glimmer of dawning,
She saw him enter the door,
Her Son, all living and real,
Risen, to die no more!

Her Son, all living and real,
Risen no more to die, —
With the power of an endless life in his face,
With the light of heaven in his eye.

O mourning mothers, so many,
Weeping o'er sons that are dead,
Have ye thought of the sorrows of Mary's heart,
Of the tears that Mary shed?

Is the crown of thorns before you ?
Are there memories of cruel scorn ?
Of hunger and thirst and bitter cold
That your belovèd have borne ?

Had ye ever a son like Jesus
To give to a death of pain ?
Did ever a son so cruelly die,
But did he die in vain ?

Have ye ever thought that all the hopes
That make our earth-life fair,
Were born in those three bitter days
Of Mary's deep despair ?

O mourning mothers, so many,
Weeping in woe and pain,
Think on the joy of Mary's heart
In a Son that is risen again.

Have faith in a third-day morning,
In a resurrection-hour ;
For what ye sow in weakness,
He can raise again in power.

Have faith in the Lord of that thorny crown,
In the Lord of the piercèd hand ;
For he reigneth now o'er earth and heaven,
And his power who may withstand ?

And the hopes that never on earth shall bloom,
The sorrows forever new,
Lay silently down at the feet of Him
Who died and is risen for you.

VI

DAY DAWN

The dim gray dawn, upon the eastern hills,
Brings back to light once more the cheerless scene;
But oh! no morning in my Father's house
Is dawning now, for there no night hath been.

Ten thousand thousand now, on Zion's hills,
All robed in white, with palmy crowns, do stray,
While I, an exile, far from fatherland,
Still wandering, faint along the desert way.

O home! dear home! my own, my native home!
O Father, friends! when shall I look on you?
When shall these weary wanderings be o'er,
And I be gathered back to stray no more?

O Thou, the brightness of whose gracious face
These weary, longing eyes have never seen, —
By whose dear thought, for whose belovèd sake,
My course, through toil and tears, I daily take, —

I think of thee when the myrrh-dropping morn
Steps forth upon the purple eastern steep;
I think of thee in the fair eventide,
When the bright-sandaled stars their watches keep.

And trembling Hope, and fainting, sorrowing Love,
On thy dear word for comfort doth rely;

And clear-eyed Faith, with strong forereaching gaze,
Beholds thee here, unseen, but ever nigh.

Walking in white with thee, she dimly sees,
All beautiful, these lovely ones withdrawn,
With whom my heart went upward, as they rose,
Like morning stars, to light a coming dawn.

All sinless now, and crowned and glorified,
Where'er thou movest move they still with thee,
As erst, in sweet communion by thy side,
Walked John and Mary in old Galilee.

But hush, my heart! 'T is but a day or two
Divides thee from that bright, immortal shore.
Rise up! rise up! and gird thee for the race!
Fast fly the hours, and all will soon be o'er.

Thou hast the new name written in thy soul;
Thou hast the mystic stone He gives his own.
Thy soul, made one with him, shall feel no more
That she is walking on her path alone.

VII

WHEN I AWAKE I AM STILL WITH THEE

Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,
When the bird waketh and the shadows flee;
Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,
Dawns the sweet consciousness, *I am with Thee!*

Alone with Thee, amid the mystic shadows,
The solemn hush of nature newly born;
Alone with Thee in breathless adoration,
In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.

As in the dawning o'er the waveless ocean
The image of the morning star doth rest,
So in this stillness Thou beholdest only
Thine image in the waters of my breast.

Still, still with Thee! as to each new-born morning
A fresh and solemn splendor still is given,
So doth the blessed consciousness, awaking,
Breathe, each day, nearness unto Thee and heaven.

When sinks the soul, subdued by toil, to slumber,
Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer;
Sweet the repose beneath the wings o'ershading,
But sweeter still to wake and find Thee there.

So shall it be at last, in that bright morning
When the soul waketh and life's shadows flee;
O in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,
Shall rise the glorious thought, *I am with Thee!*

PRESSED FLOWERS FROM ITALY

A DAY IN THE PAMFILI DORIA

THOUGH the hills are cold and snowy,
And the wind drives chill to-day,
My heart goes back to a spring-time,
Far, far in the past away.

And I see a quaint old city,
Weary and worn and brown,
Where the spring and the birds are so early,
And the sun in such light goes down.

I remember that old-times villa,
Where our afternoons went by,
Where the suns of March flushed warmly,
And spring was in earth and sky.

Out of the mouldering city,
Mouldering, old, and gray,
We sped, with a lightsome heart-thrill,
For a sunny, gladsome day, —

For a revel of fresh spring verdure,
For a race 'mid springing flowers,
For a vision of plashing fountains,
Of birds and blossoming bowers.

There were violet banks in the shadows,
Violets white and blue ;
And a world of bright anemones,
That over the terrace grew, —

Blue and orange and purple,
Rosy and yellow and white,
Rising in rainbow bubbles,
Streaking the lawns with light.

And down from the old stone pine-trees,
Those far-off islands of air,
The birds are flinging the tidings
Of a joyful revel up there.

And now for the grand old fountains,
Tossing their silvery spray,
Those fountains so quaint and so many,
That are leaping and singing all day.

Those fountains of strange weird sculpture,
With lichens and moss o'ergrown,
Are they marble greening in moss-wreaths ?
Or moss-wreaths whitening to stone ?

Down many a wild, dim pathway
We ramble from morning till noon ;
We linger, unheeding the hours,
Till evening comes all too soon.

And from out the ilex alleys,
Where lengthening shadows play,
We look on the dreamy Campagna,
All glowing with setting day, —

All melting in bands of purple,
In swathings and foldings of gold,
In ribands of azure and lilac,
Like a princely banner unrolled.

And the smoke of each distant cottage,
And the flash of each villa white,
Shines out with an opal glimmer,
Like gems in a casket of light.

And the dome of old St. Peter's
With a strange translucence glows,
Like a mighty bubble of amethyst
Floating in waves of rose.

In a trance of dreamy vagueness
We, gazing and yearning, behold
That city beheld by the prophet,
Whose walls were transparent gold.

And, dropping all solemn and slowly,
To hallow the softening spell,
There falls on the dying twilight
The Ave Maria bell.

With a mournful, motherly softness,
With a weird and weary care,
That strange and ancient city
Seems calling the nations to prayer.

And the words that of old the angel
To the mother of Jesus brought,
Rise like a new evangel,
To hallow the trance of our thought.

With the smoke of the evening incense,
Our thoughts are ascending then
To Mary, the mother of Jesus,
To Jesus, the Master of men.

O city of prophets and martyrs,
O shrines of the sainted dead,
When, when shall the living day-spring
Once more on your towers be spread?

When He who is meek and lowly
Shall rule in those lordly halls,
And shall stand and feed as a shepherd
The flock which his mercy calls, —

O then to those noble churches,
To picture and statue and gem,
To the pageant of solemn worship,
Shall the *meaning* come back again.

And this strange and ancient city,
In that reign of His truth and love,
Shall *be* what it *seems* in the twilight,
The type of that City above.

THE GARDENS OF THE VATICAN

Sweet fountains, plashing with a dreamy fall,
And mosses green, and tremulous veils of fern,
And banks of blowing cyclamen, and stars,
Blue as the skies, of myrtle blossoming,
The twilight shade of ilex overhead
O'erbubbling with sweet song of nightingale,
With walks of strange, weird stillness, leading on
'Mid sculptured fragments half to green moss gone,
Or breaking forth amid the violet leaves
With some white gleam of an old world gone by.
Ah! strange, sweet quiet! wilderness of calm,
Gardens of dreamy rest, I long to lay
Beneath your shade the last long sigh, and say,
Here is my home, my Lord, thy home and mine;
And I, having searched the world with many a tear,
At last have found thee and will stray no more.
But vainly here I seek the Gardener
That Mary saw. These lovely halls beyond,
That airy, sky-like dome, that lofty fane,
Is as a palace whence the king is gone
And taken all the sweetness with himself.
Turn again, Jesus, and possess thine own!
Come to thy temple once more as of old!
Drive forth the money-changers, let it be
A house of prayer for nations. Even so,
Amen! Amen!

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

HOLY WEEK, APRIL, 1860

O FAIREST mansion of a Father's love,
Harmonious! hospitable! with thine arms
Outspread to all, thy fountains ever full,
And, fair as heaven, thy misty, sky-like dome
Hung like the firmament with circling sweep
Above the constellated golden lamps
That burn forever round the holy tomb.
Most meet art thou to be the Father's house,
The house of prayer for nations. Come the time
When thou shalt be so! when a liberty,
Wide as thine arms, high as thy lofty dome,
Shall be proclaimed, by thy loud singing choirs,
Like voice of many waters! Then the Lord
Shall come into his temple, and make pure
The sons of Levi; then, as once of old,
The blind shall see, the lame leap as an hart,
And to the poor the Gospel shall be preached,
And Easter's silver-sounding trumpets tell,
"The Lord is risen indeed," to die no more.
Hasten it in its time. Amen! Amen!

THE MISERERE

Not of the earth that music! all things fade;
Vanish the pictured walls! and, one by one,
The starry candles silently expire!

And now, O Jesus! round that silent cross
A moment's pause, a hush as of the grave.
Now rises slow a silver mist of sound,
And all the heavens break out in drops of grief;
A rain of sobbing sweetness, swelling, dying,
Voice into voice inweaving with sweet throbs,
And fluttering pulses of impassioned moan, —
Veiled voices, in whose wailing there is awe,
And mysteries of love and agony,
A yearning anguish of celestial souls,
A shiver as of wings trembling the air,
As if God's shining doves, his spotless birds,
Wailed with a nightingale's heart-break of grief,
In this their starless night, when for our sins
Their sun, their life, their love, hangs darkly there,
Like a slain lamb, bleeding his life away!

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